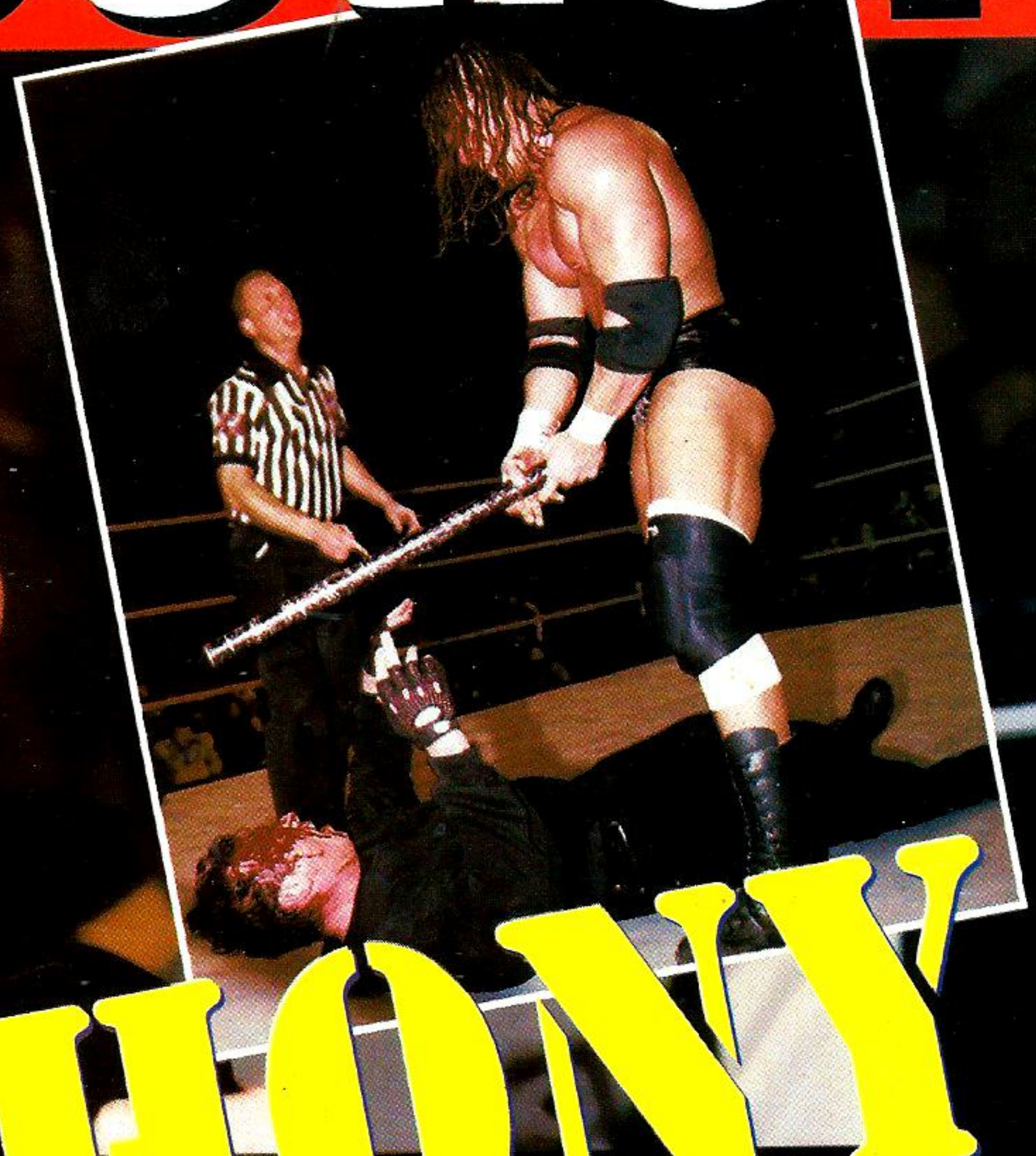
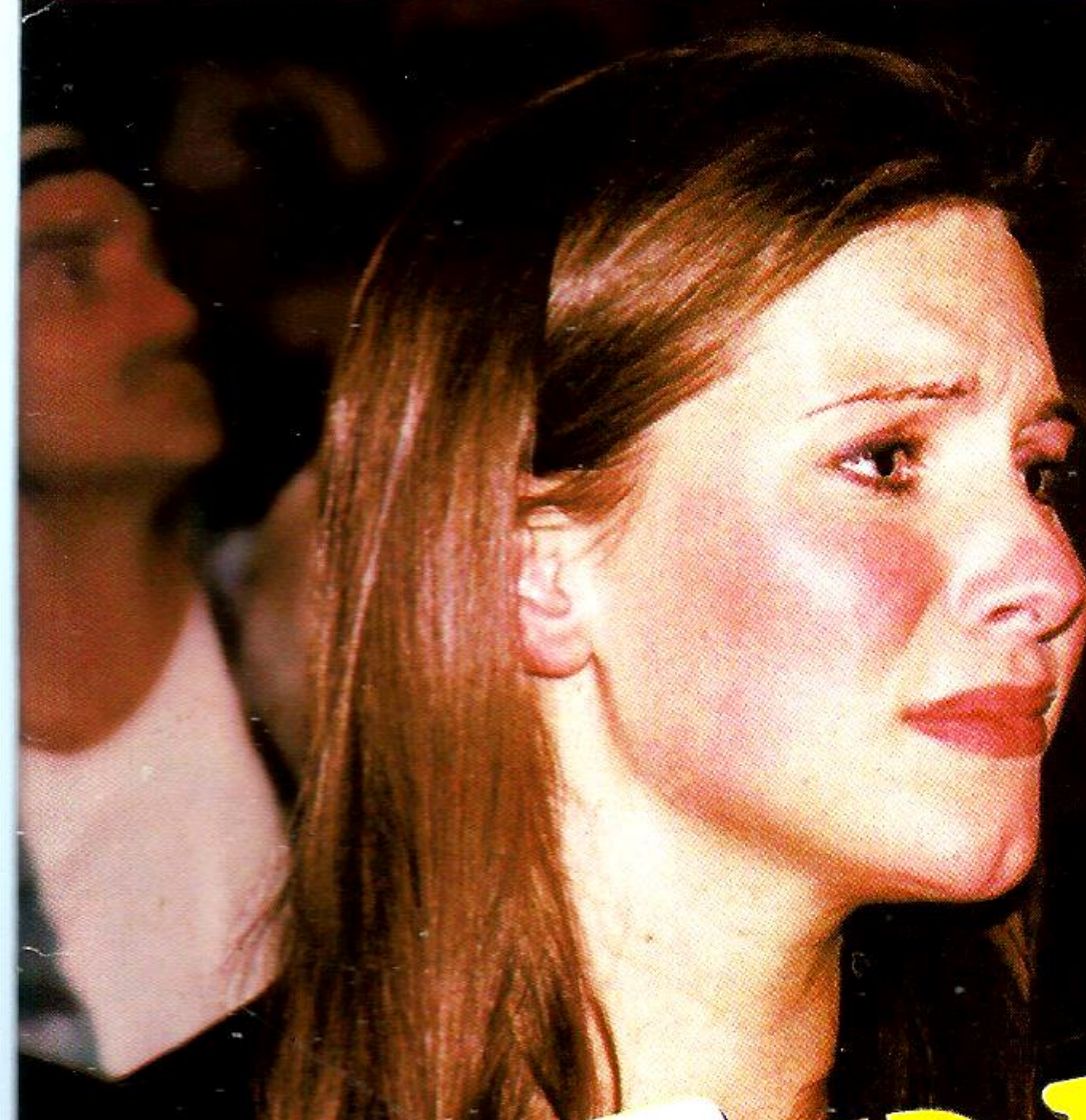


RODDY PIPER: "I'M EMBARRASSED TO CALL MYSELF A WRESTLER"

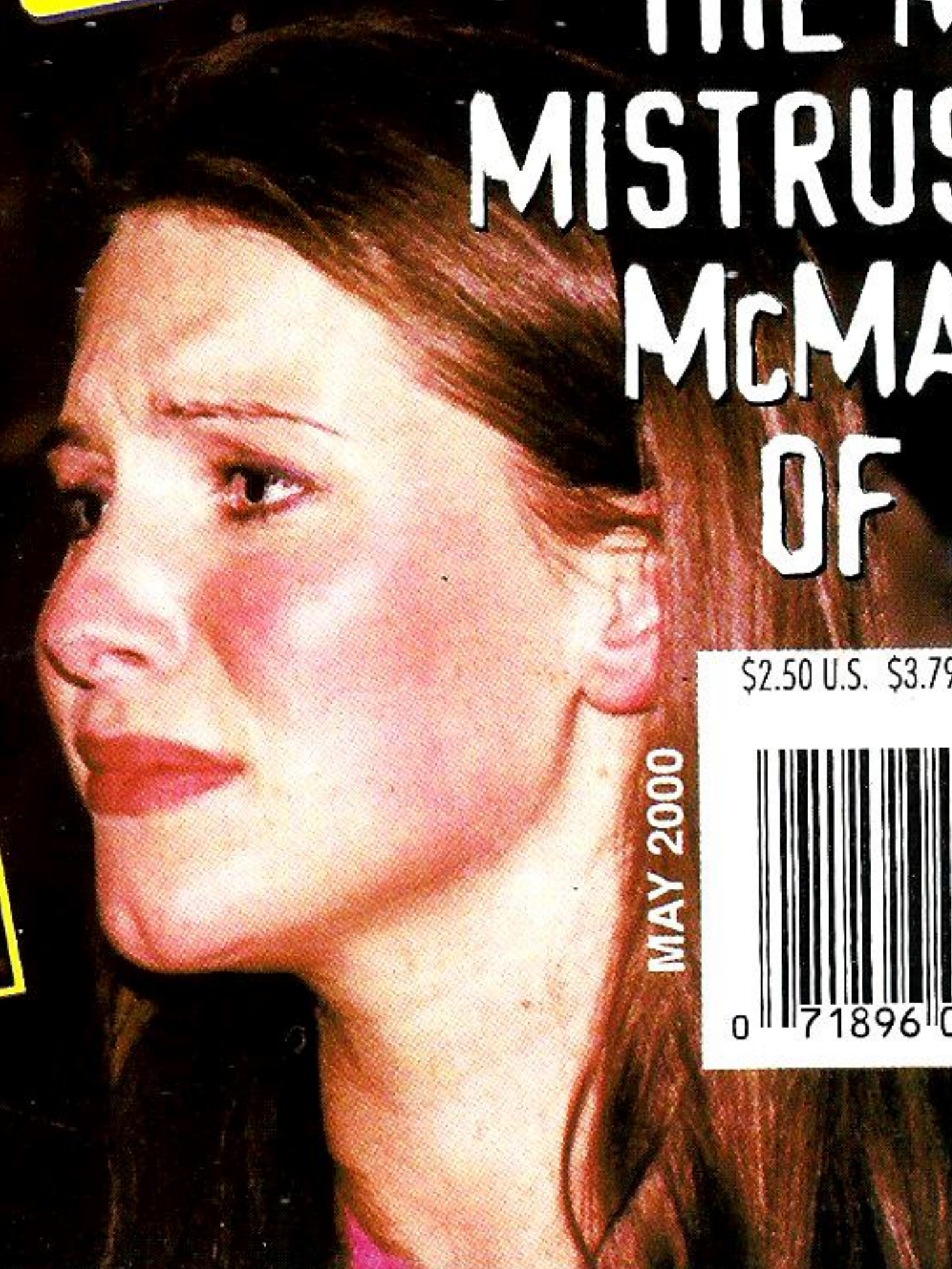
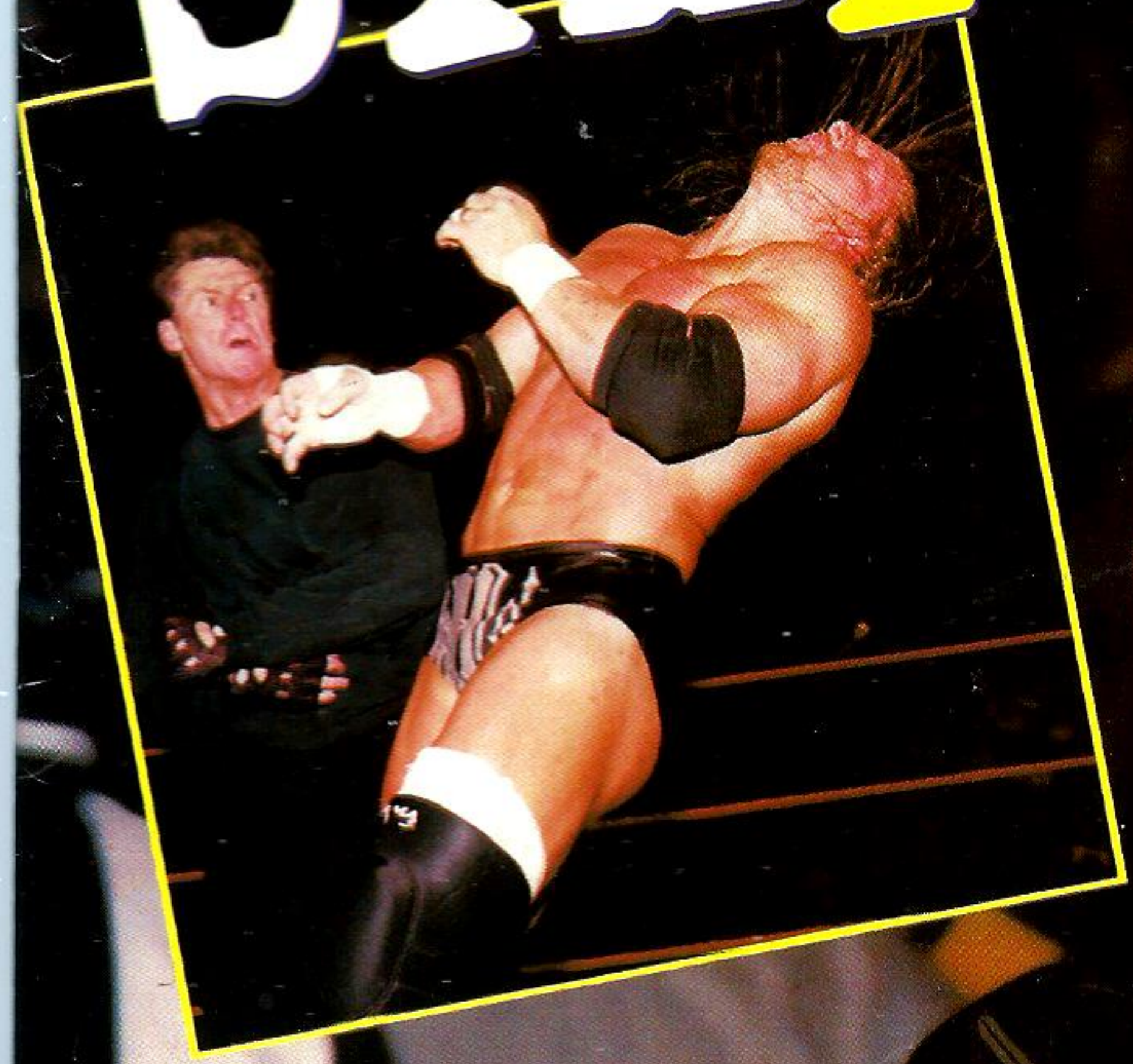
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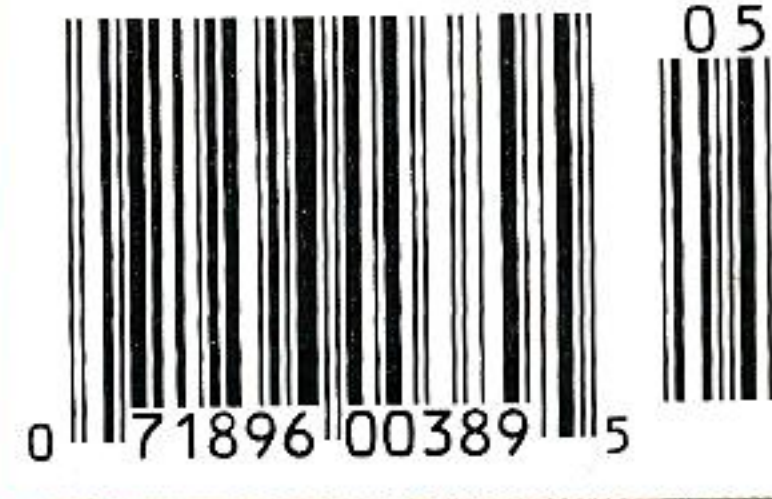
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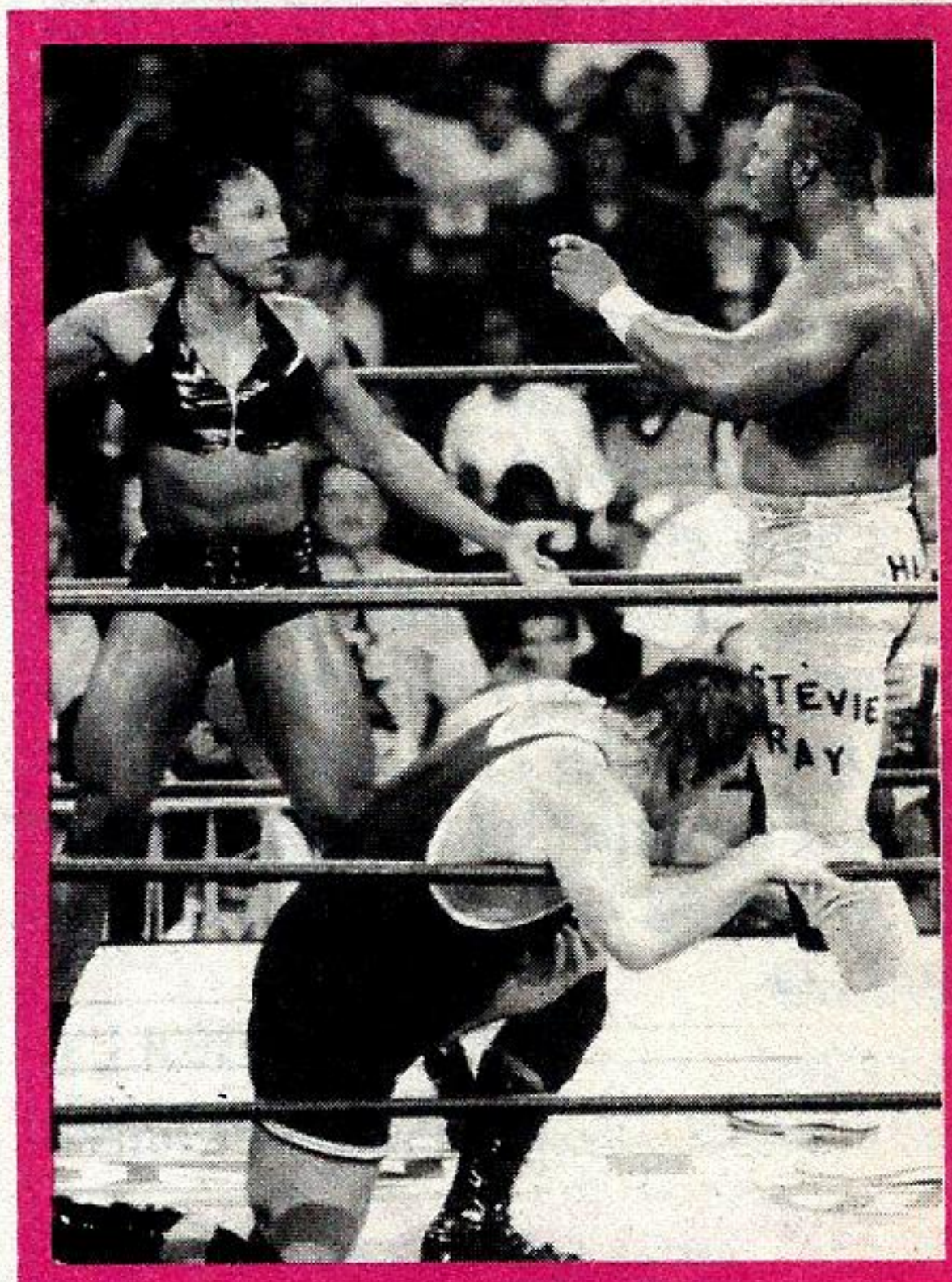
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DEPARTMENTS

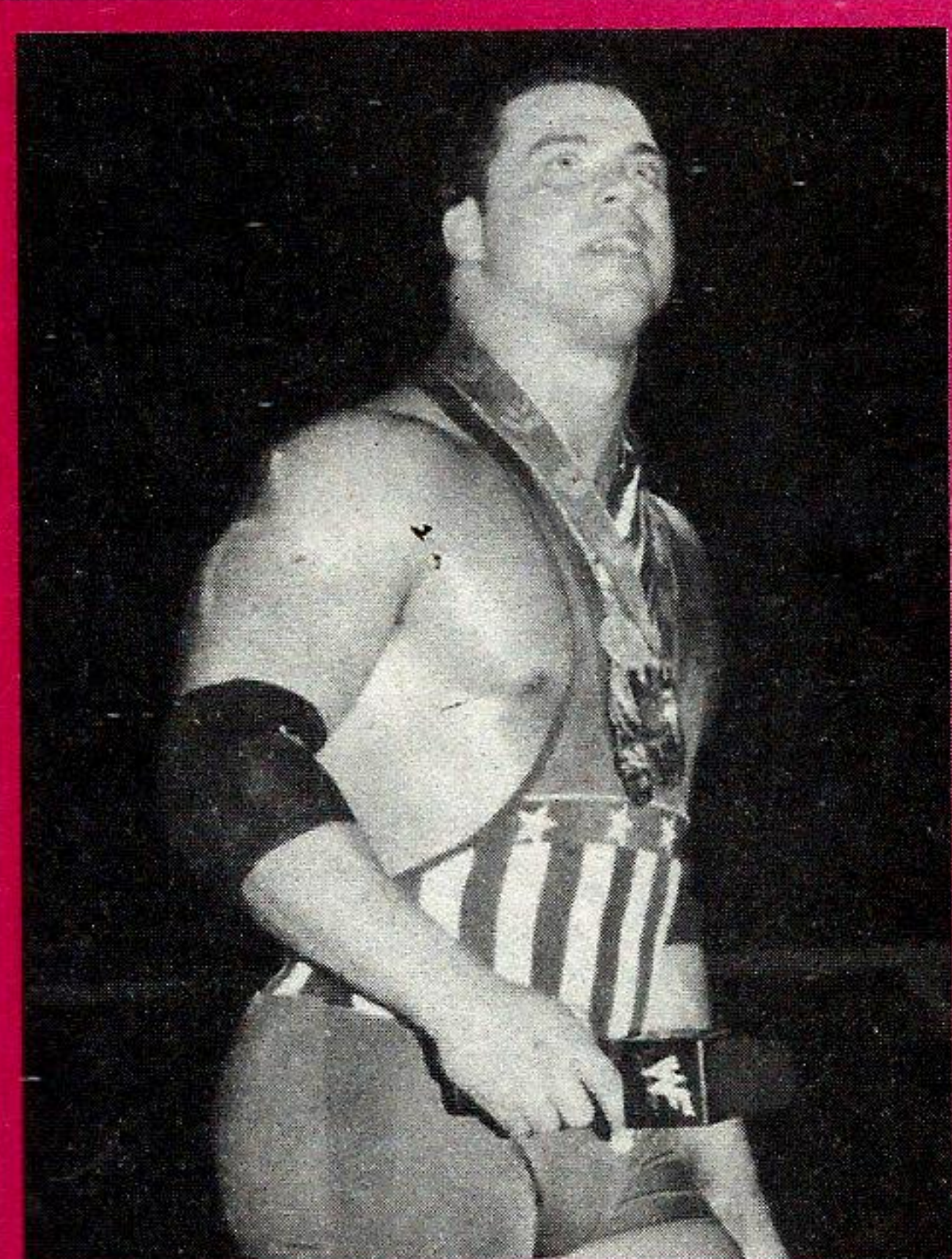
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YOUR Letters

STING ZINGER

For years, all I've heard is how great Sting is. Well, after watching Starrcade '99, I'd have to say that Sting is one of the dumbest men in wrestling. He fell for Elizabeth's ruse again, and Lex Luger made a fool of him yet again. It amazes me that a wrestler of Sting's experience can fall for the same old trick time after time.

Sting fans, be honest with yourselves. Sting isn't half the man or half the wrestler Lex Luger is. "The Total Package" has made a living off exposing Sting as the fraud he really is.

MEGAN REILLY
Watertown, MA

ELEKTRA-FIED

I would do anything if you guys at THE WRESTLER could print more pictures of Elektra—Danny Doring's latest valet. She is a fox and a damn fine weapon to have at ringside. Elektra deserves the same amount of coverage as Francine and Dawn Marie.

MICHAEL ROMAN
Allentown, PA

ANGRY DOWN UNDER

I am a faithful WCW fan, but even I am disgusted by the tasteless and mean-spirited parody of Jim Ross called Oklahoma. To single out the sport's best announcer and make a mockery of a very serious affliction is terrible and in reality has nothing to do with wrestling at all.

When it comes to calling the action, Ross is unparalleled in the industry. Besides, no man should be subjected to humiliation the way Ross has been.

If this is the direction in which WCW's new powers are heading, then I just might be switching over to ECW. At least the wrestlers there actually wrestle.

AMY FARMER
Brisbane, Australia

OFFENSIVE REMARK

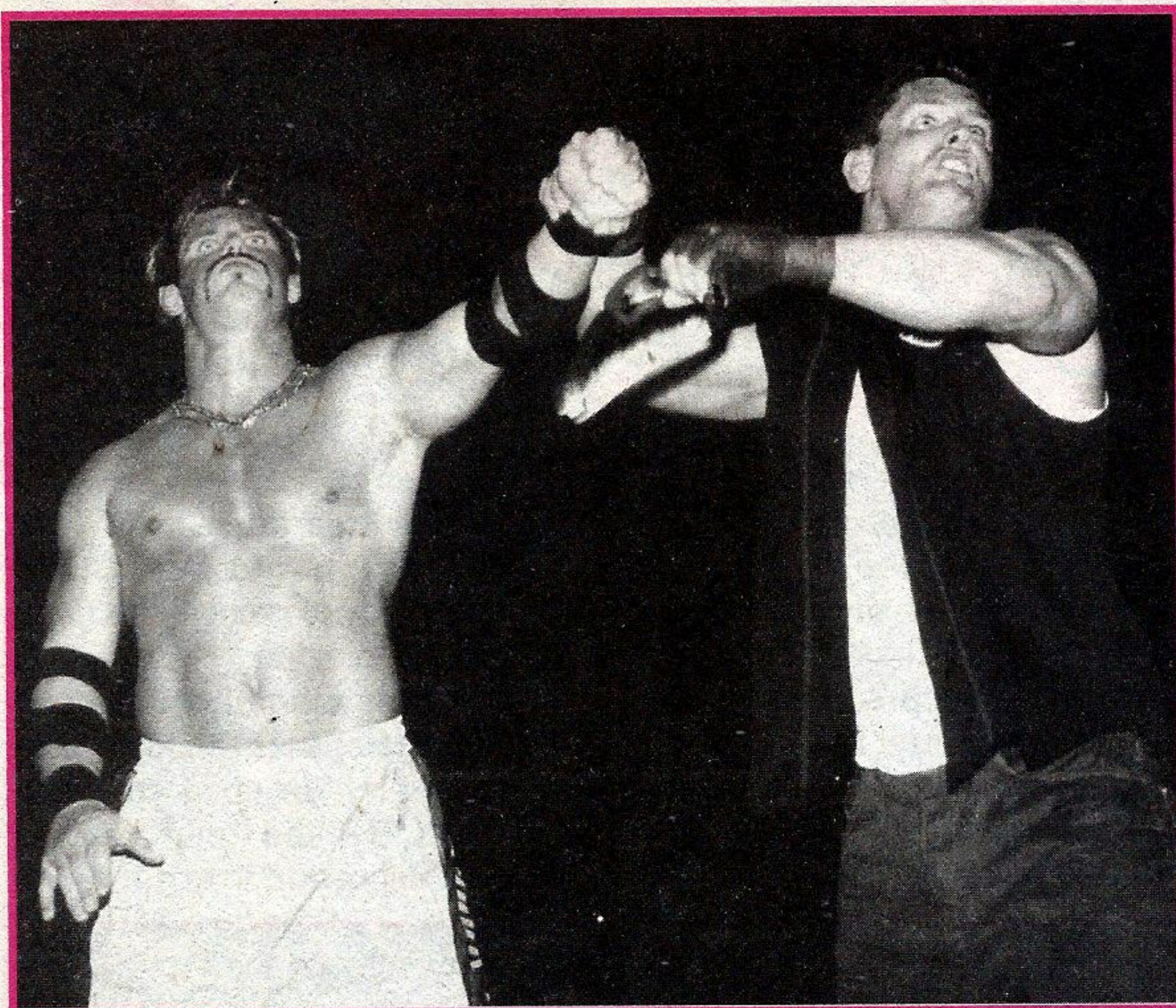
Normally, I agree with just about everything I read in your fine magazines, but I must take exception with something Massa Saito

said in the March 2000 issue ("X-Ray: Chyna").

Where does this over-the-hill retiree get off saying it's a disgrace that a woman like Chyna can hold a title as prestigious as the Intercontinental title? As far as I can remember, Saito never won the Intercontinental title, and he hasn't wrestled for two years. I think Saito needs to get in touch with today's sport. Chyna has proven that she has the skill and



Sexiness and attitude will get you far in ECW. Newcomer Elektra has both in abundance, says reader Michael Roman. We agree.



Scott Taylor and Brian Christopher were always good wrestlers, but as Scotty Too Hotty and Grandmaster Sexy, Too Cool have really hit their stride, according to reader Jeff Randall.

desire to succeed whether it's against men or women. Women, especially Chyna, have made great strides in our sport, and it's time for Saito to recognize that.

CATHERINE PARKS
Toronto, Ontario

WHASSAMADDA U?

Most people think I'm crazy when I tell them that my favorite wrestlers are Big Vito and Johnny the Bull from WCW. I think their feud with Disco Inferno and Lash LeRoux was entertaining, and I also thought it was a riot when they took "Mean" Gene Okerlund out for a night on the town. They proved at Starrcade '99 that they can work well together as a team by beating Inferno and LeRoux in a very convincing manner. Here's to Big Vito and Johnny the Bull, two studs from New York who kick butt Italian-style.

MARY DIO
Brooklyn, NY

ONE TOO COOL FAN

After watching The Dudley Boyz, Acolytes, and Hollys all rise

to the top of the WWF, I have to ask Vince McMahon, where is Too Cool's push? Brian Christopher and Scott Taylor are among the most agile and best-conditioned athletes in the WWF. They have a great look, lots of chemistry, and are hilarious on top of it all. They get a great reaction from the crowd wherever they wrestle, and the addition of Rikishi Phatu to their "posse" was perfect. I think they would have a great run as tag team champs if they could win the belts.

I would also like to congratulate Miss Kitty for taking the initiative and exposing her breasts at Armageddon. Accidental nudity. Yeah, right.

JEFF RANDALL
Beaumont, TX

ANTI-REVOLUTION

I am a 70-year-old Korean War veteran. I have watched wrestling for 30 years.

I have never been more disgusted than when I saw Dean

(Continued on page 50)

Wrestler

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WHAT'S

Happening

By Dan Murphy

AS FAR AS Kevin Nash is concerned, the NWO never really went away—it went underground. The addition of **Scott Steiner** to the NWO silver and black brought back shades of the NWO that wreaked havoc upon WCW in 1998 and early-1999. While today's New World Order is more balanced, Nash said the clique is more focused than ever on its goal of bringing WCW to its knees.

"Scott Hall and I learned from our mistakes last time around," Nash said. "This time, we're not dealing with stuffed suits, or fossils like **Hollywood Hogan**, or any dead weight like **Buff Bagwell**, **Sting**, or **Scott Norton**. NWO silver is the elite—a wrestling all-star team, and it won't be long before we make everyone forget the NWO of the past."

With **Bret Hart** vowing to regain the World title, **Jeff Jarrett** holding the U.S. belt, and **The Outsiders** a fixture on an ever-changing tag team scene, NWO silver might be on its way of doing just that. However, even the NWO "all-stars" have their critics. Chief among them are some former NWO members, including **Stevie Ray**. "The problem with the NWO was never talent; it was leadership,"

Ray said. "Those are some talented dudes, but sooner or later, guys like Steiner and Jarrett are gonna realize they're not goin' nowhere, and that's when the finger-pointing starts. Mark my words—there won't be no NWO after a few months."

In last month's column, I wrote

that **Hunter Hearst Helmsley** got the girl (**Stephanie McMahon**) and was ready to reclaim the gold. It didn't take him long.

Though he often found himself in **Shawn Michaels'** shadow during the early days of **DeGeneration X**, Triple-H managed to tie HBK's mark of three WWF



Kevin Nash (seen here with fellow NWO member Bret Hart) calls the NWO silver a "wrestling all-star team," but former members predict this version will meet the same fate as the previous two.



No one in ECW questions Mike Awesome's toughness—not after watching his matches with Masato Tanaka, but some are wondering why he was so intent on taking a pay-per-view match with Spike Dudley.

World title reigns when he beat **The Big Show** on January 3. The victory gives Helmsley virtually absolute control of the WWF. However, "The Game's" meteoric rise to the top of the WWF begs to ask the question of how the former DX head feels about current events. After all, doesn't the commissioner have the power to step in and restore some semblance of order to the federation? Or is Michaels' lack of action an implicit approval of Helmsley's tactics? Remember, it wasn't all that long ago that Triple-H set up Michaels for an attack by **Vince McMahon's Corporation**. Has Michaels forgiven him, or does "The Heartbreak Kid" have some special plans as Triple-H heads into WrestleMania XVI?

Rumor around the ECW locker room is that several wrestlers feel **Mike Awesome** has been getting off easy in his recent title defenses. After losing to and regaining

the ECW World title from **Masato Tanaka**, Awesome was signed to face **Spike Dudley** at the Guilty as Charged pay-per-view. While Dudley does have a strong resume of upset wins in his favor, many observers have suggested the matchup between the 6'5" Awesome and the 5'5" Dudley was signed just so Awesome could earn a convincing win in front of a major audience. While ECW commentator **Joey Styles** downplayed the conspiracy theories, he did admit the scenario did seem curious.

"Spike is long overdue for a title shot," Styles said. "I'm just wondering why Awesome took the match. It seemed to me that he had everything to lose and nothing to gain from it."

Madusa is not content with the WCW cruiserweight title. "I've been watching some of the other prominent women in this business, and I know I can be just as domi-

nant against men if the Powers-That-Be gave me the chance," she said, clearly referring to **Chyna**. "Put me in there with any man and I'll give him the fight of his life!"

The Colorado Kid continues to impress. Long considered a can't-miss prospect for the Big Two, Kid beat **Terry Taylor** on Christmas night in Nashville to regain the NWA North American title.

Mae Young says she is as happy and carefree as a 50-year-old girl over her love affair with **Mark Henry**. Henry responded with a poem he wrote which, unfortunately, is not suitable for print in a family publication (or, in my opinion, any other publication).

NWA 2000 promoter **Dennis Coraluzzo** was removed from the NWA board of directors on December 31, 1999. Unpaid financial obligations were at the heart of the ouster, but NWA President **Howard Brody** said there is a

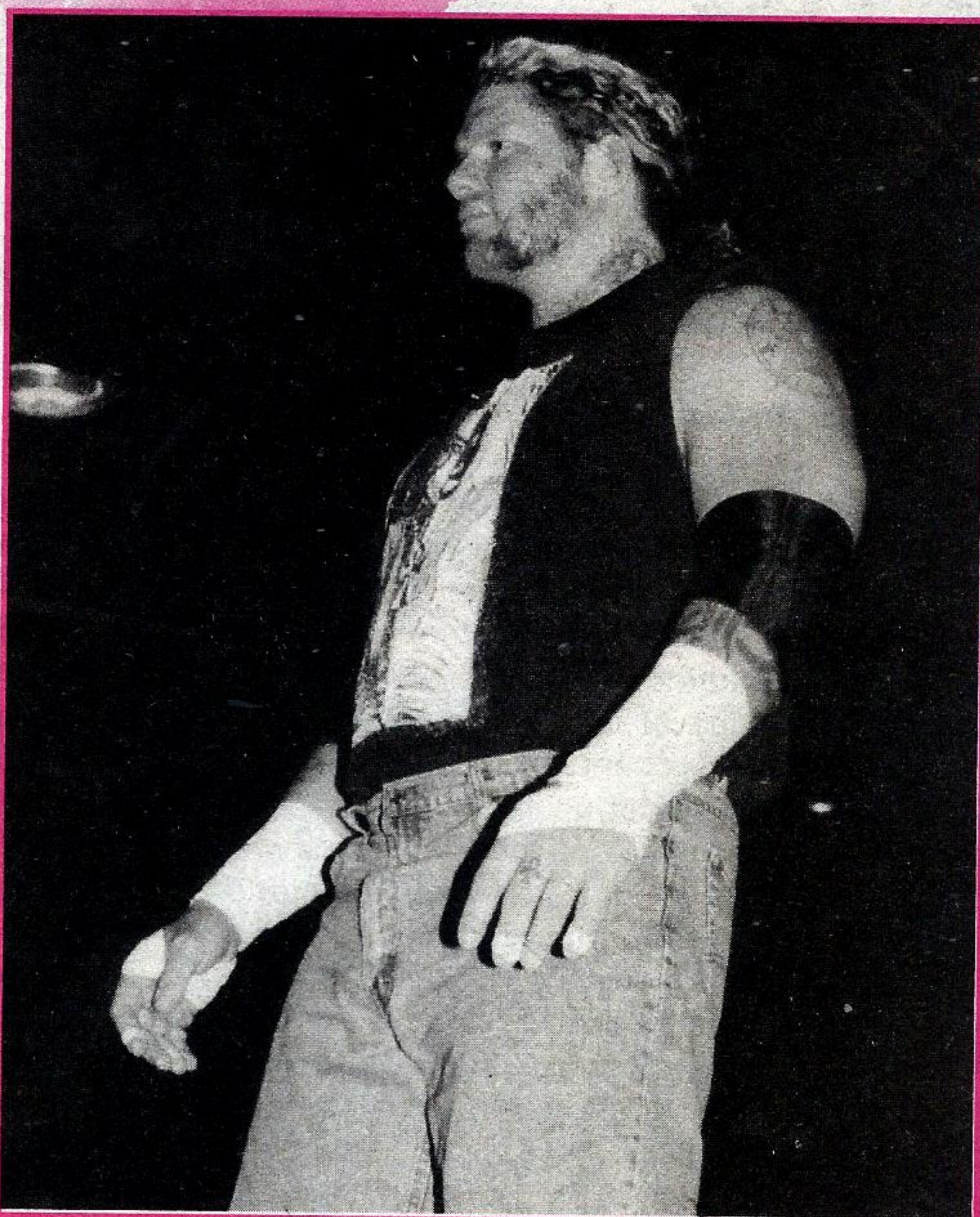
(Continued on page 51)

NO HÖLDS Barred

with Will Welsh

TRUE STORY: I was at the ECW Arena, standing dead square in the middle of the ring. To the right of me was Tommy Dreamer. To the left of me, bending over the ring ropes and arching her back ever so seductively, was Francine. I could hear the voice of Joey Styles, somewhat muffled, talking in the back. Then, suddenly, Raven's music came on, and out he charged with Rhino.

That's when the sweat that had been beading on my forehead released and started gushing down my face. I looked over at Dreamer, but he acted as if I wasn't even there. He was intent on wrapping his hands around the throat of Rhino and choking the very life out of him. Apparently, it was my job to take care of Raven. Either way, I knew I was about to have my 5'9", 185-pound tail handed to me. I was most definitely in the wrong place



While immersed in *Hardcore Revolution*, ECW's first video game, Associate Editor Will Welsh was thrown into some barbed wire by former ECW champ Raven. Guess Raven didn't know that Welsh is a fan of his.

at the wrong time—and remember—this is a true story.

Oh, by the way, did I mention that the ring ropes had been replaced by barbed wire? No? Well, they had been.

Then, as soon as the bell rang, an amazing thing happened. Raven charged, and I found myself nailing him with a spinning heel kick. Before that very moment, the only thing that I had ever kicked was a soccer ball, and I did that rather poorly. Still, I kept the pressure up. I had Raven on the outs, and after I had linked a couple of successful high-impact moves together (yes, me, linking high-impact moves together!), I thought I had him beat. I thought wrong.

With his blood smeared across my chest (I mean, it couldn't have been my blood, right?), I charged him. This time, however, my aggressiveness cost me. Raven slipped to

the side and tripped me up with his drop toehold, dropping me right across the barbed wire.

Feeling like I was on the verge of defeat—and certainly looking

(Continued on page 54)

By
Harry
Burkett

Y2J is Jericho

THE TERM "JERICHOHOLIC" used to amuse me. Not anymore. Not after Chris Jericho repeatedly smashed Chyna's hand with a hammer.

The scars on Chyna's thumb will always remind her of the night Jericho tied her to a chair, taunted her, made her scream for mercy, and then kept bashing her. She'll probably have nightmares about the episode for the rest of her life. I know I would.

Yet what has happened to Y2J since that infamous night? The WWF didn't suspend or fire him. It simply can't punish a future star like that. It has to continue promoting him like he's the second coming, even though he's barely even prophet material.

When Jericho enters an arena, complete with the Y2J countdown clock and pyrotechnic explosions—an entrance that would have truly befit the heavy metal hair bands of the '80s—he still has the nerve to pose, smirk, and laugh.

If I strapped a woman to a chair and hammered her thumb, I'd be getting used to my new life in jail.

What really make me sick are the legions of Jerichoholics who are now hailing Y2J as a hero. Because Jericho has been smart—since the night he crushed Chyna's thumb, he has delivered his caustic barbs against despicable men like Big Bossman and Bob Holly—he's been able to deflect deserved criticism, even though his crimes are just as serious as any that Bossman and Holly have perpetrated. Then he parlays his "righteous" actions into more fervent crowd support, in essence converting more fans into Jerichoholics.

Who are these Jerichoholics, anyway?

Jericho started using the term in 1997, soon after turning rulebreaker in WCW. But just because Jericho changed his wrestling philosophy didn't mean he didn't yearn for adulation from the fans. In fact, Jericho pretended he was still a fan idol, oblivious to the boos and shouts of "Crybaby! Crybaby!" when he strutted to ringside.

Ironically, Jericho's unwillingness to accept reality worked in his favor. Many fans began cheering Jericho, proud to see the upstart "do his own thing." Jericho's popularity grew to new heights as he nursed an injured ankle in early-1999. His contract negotiations with

WCW were at a standstill, and it was widely assumed he would enter the WWF. Jericho became the talk of the Internet, causing a buzz that hasn't been equaled to this day.

I mention all this because I'm wondering why fans like Jericho. Let's see if I can make a connection. Doing his own thing. Making fun of the status quo. Internet.

I got it. Jericho is the quintessential Generation X-er. He's 29 years old, so his age is about right. He's hip, brash, and clever. Jericho is another in a long line of indulgences that epitomize Gen-X. Online greeting cards, *Ally McBeal*, Ben Affleck, and *Something About Mary* are just a few of the others.

Generation X-ers are different than their parents' generation, the baby boomers. Instead of grabbing protest signs or sloshing around in the mud at Woodstock to make a point, Gen X-ers don't try to change the real world. Gen X-ers go to therapists to rationalize bad behavior and use virtual reality environments (a.k.a. Internet chat-rooms) to create a world to their liking.

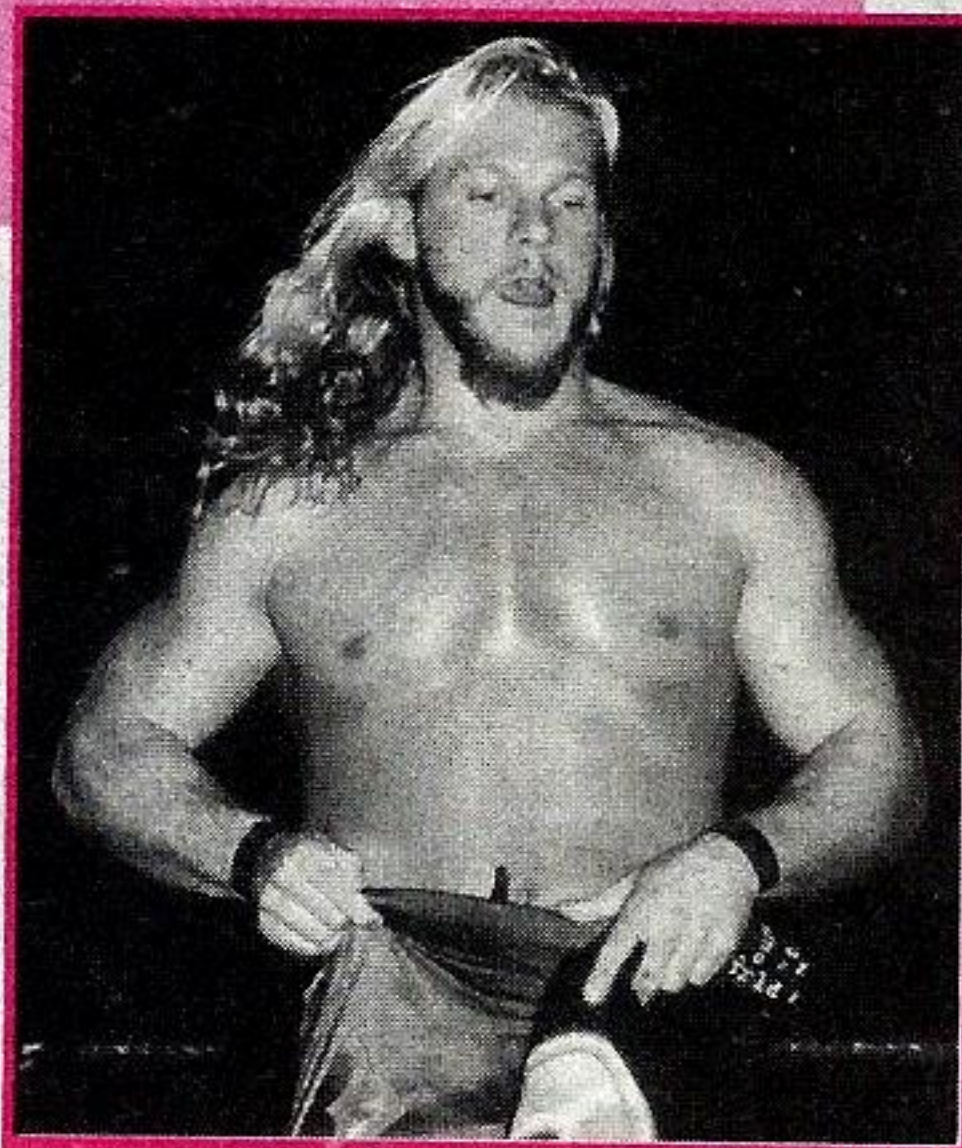
All this, of course, gets me back to Jericho. Everybody saw the crime he committed against Chyna, and everyone knows what a jerk he is. But it doesn't matter. He's a clever, witty, cute jerk. He's like alternative music: quirky, happy-go-lucky, and absolutely de-

void of substance. He's the perfectly wrapped Christmas gift—but there's nothing inside.

When I think about wrestlers from the not-too-distant past, I think of them as genuine human beings. Larry Zbyszko. Wahoo McDaniel. Jack Brisco. When Zbyszko slammed Bruno Sammartino with that chair, McDaniel turned against Steamboat, or Brisco used an uncharacteristic cheap shot, fans were genuinely disappointed. They had gotten to know these stars as people, and these wrestlers' misdeeds had consequences.

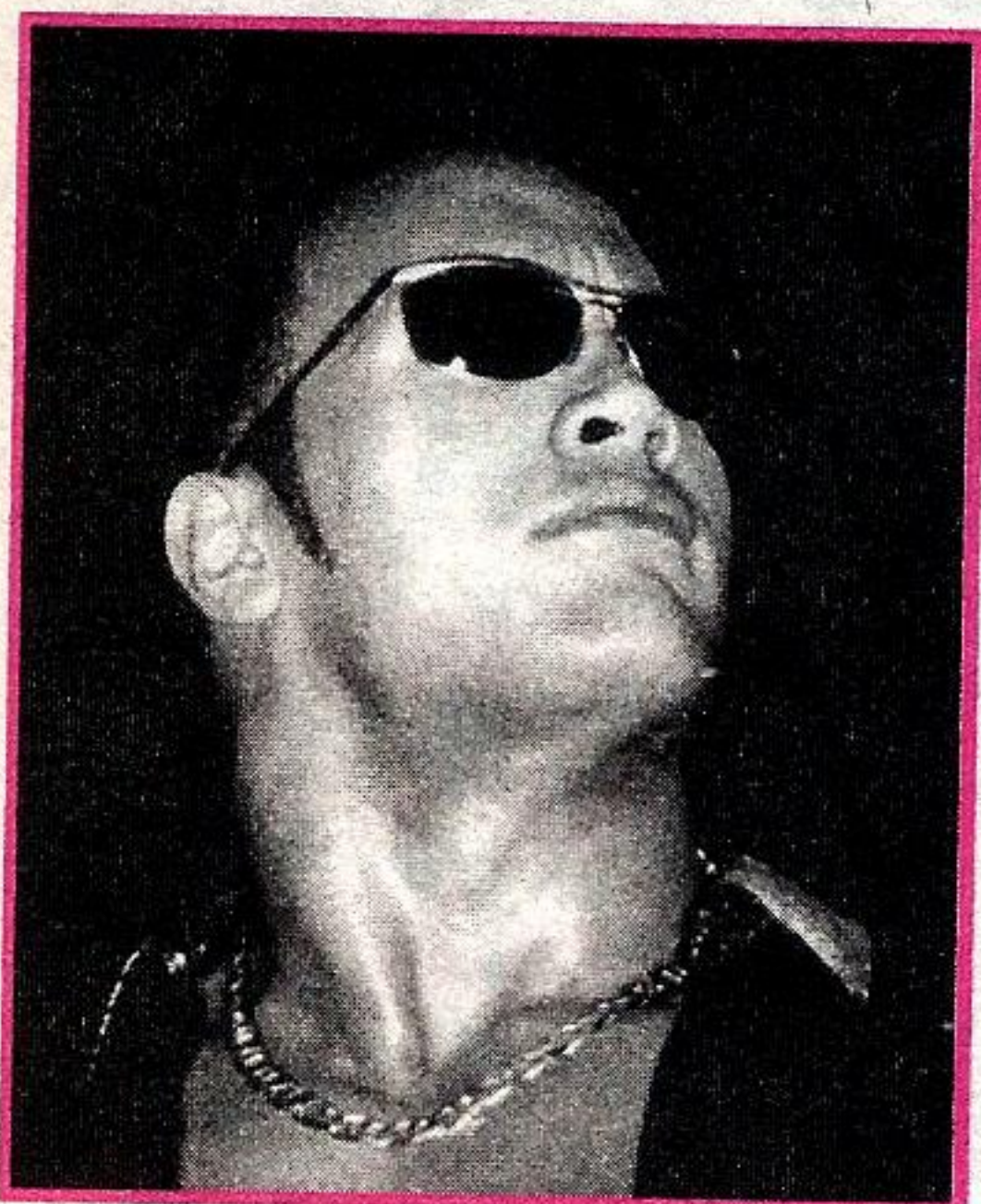
Not today. Jericho abducts and tortures a woman. Oh, I forgot, that was last week's episode. He's using clever one-liners against Bob Holly this week. That makes everything okay. Wrestlers have so far removed their personal souls from their wrestling personae that nothing matters anymore.

Did I say Jericho reminded me of *Something About Mary*? He's more like *The Talented Mr. Ripley*. □



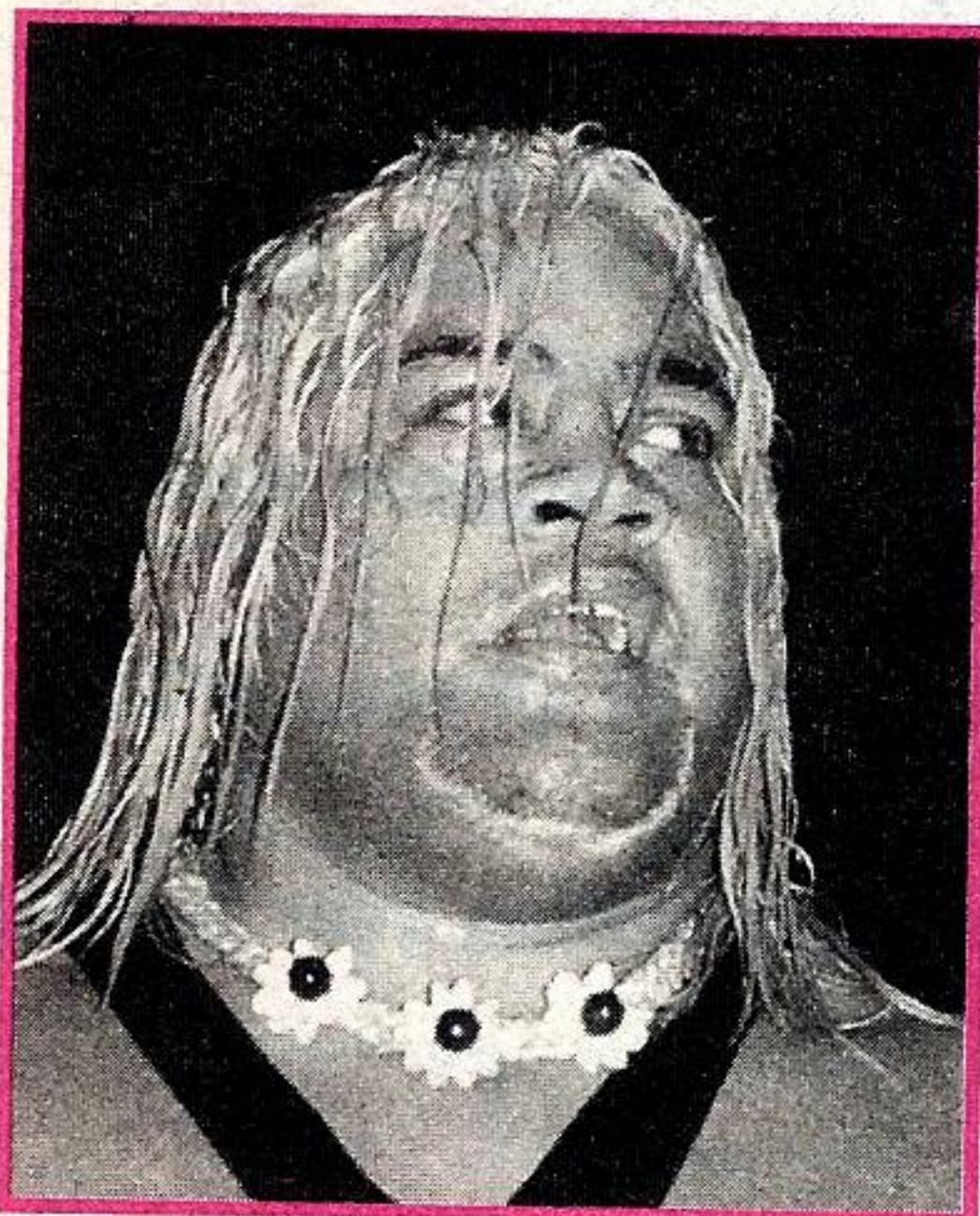
Y2Jerk!

THUMB UP



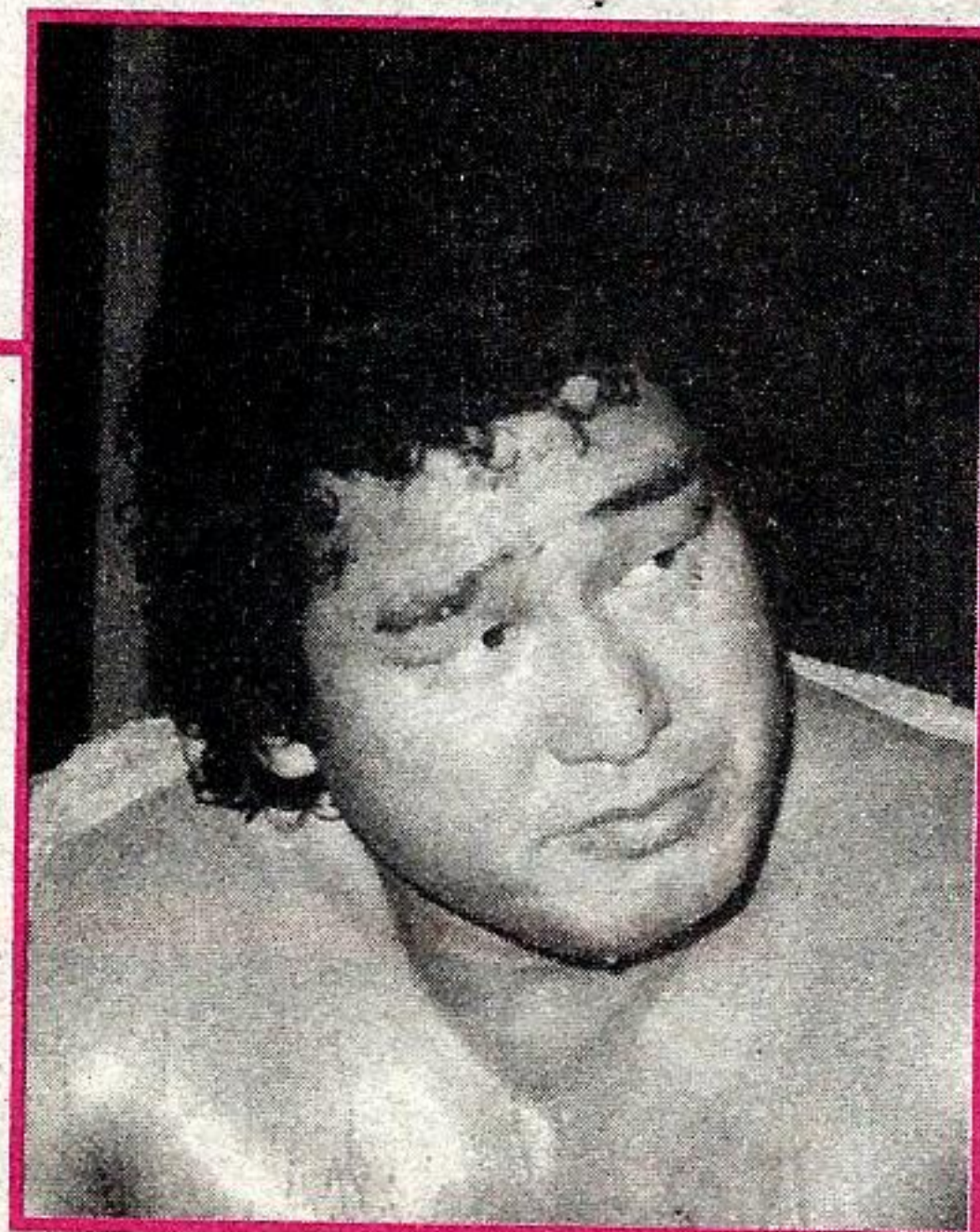
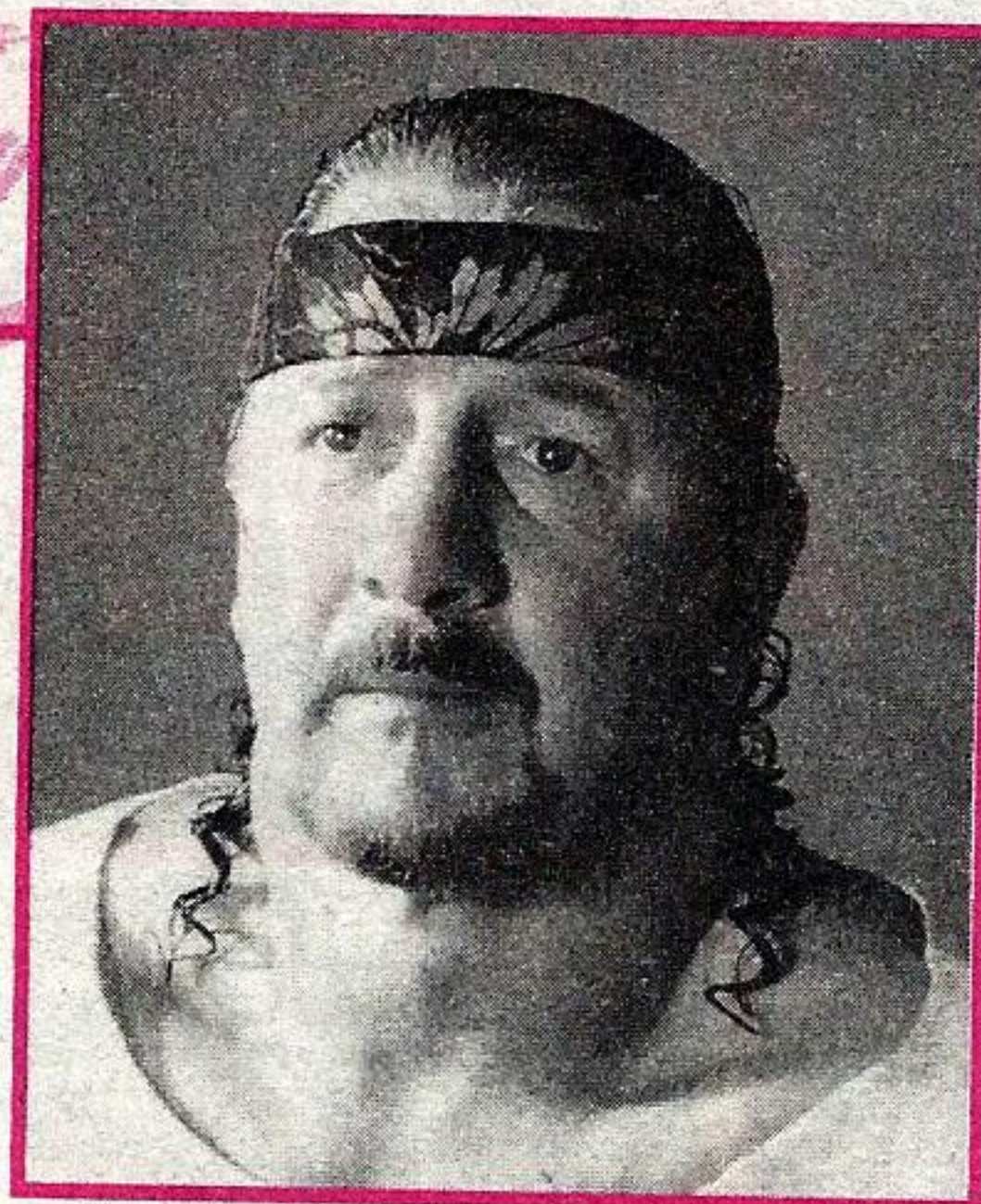
Thumbs Up to The Rock. Besides being the hottest star in the WWF right now, he's also one of the most resilient (we'll place Mankind on that resiliency list, too). Not only did he survive one attempt after another by Triple-H and Stephanie McMahon to run him out of the WWF, but he did so with style and courage. We're beginning to think that The Rock really means it when he says it doesn't matter who his opponent is. That's a big thing in a sport in which words frequently speak louder than actions. No wonder, then, that when The Rock says something, people always listen.

Thumbs Up to Terry Funk. We have no idea how long this will last, but as of press time, Funk was WCW commissioner, and that could only be good news for a federation desperately in need of a dose of law and order. With a new NWO wreaking havoc, WCW needs a strong man to counter this criminal group, which seems to taint every match in which one of its members participates. Our one concern about Funk as WCW commissioner is that he'll be too active, that he'll be more of a participant than an unbiased arbiter (the days of the unbiased commissioner, apparently, are long gone). But we do think Funk can do more good than harm.

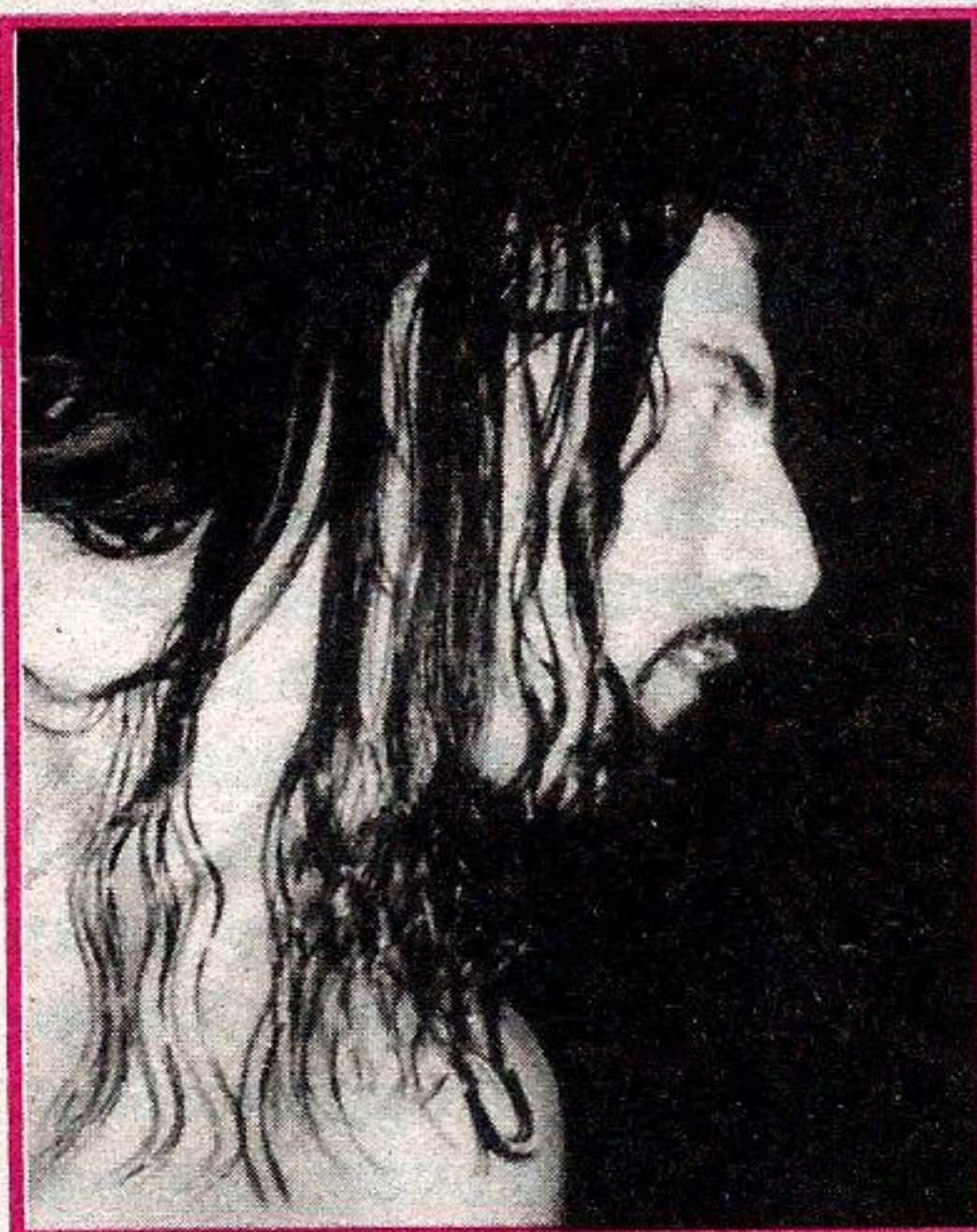


Thumbs Up to Rikishi Phatu. These days, with so many stories about waifish supermodels puking their guts out, unhealthy, but oh-so-fashionable diets, and former presidential interns pitching Jenny Craig, isn't it nice to see a big, fat guy who is happy with himself? Yes, on looks alone, Phatu might not be the most pleasant individual to gaze upon, but when he starts dancing with Grandmaster Sexy and Scotty Too Hotty, doesn't he bring a smile to your face? And isn't that what matters? If there were more people like Phatu, the world would be a fatter, but much more pleasant place in which to live.

Thumbs Up to Genichiro Tenryu. Less than two months before his 50th birthday, the Japanese legend defeated Keiji Muto—a.k.a. The Great Muta—in Japan for his first IWGP heavyweight title. Tenryu became the second man to win both the IWGP heavyweight title and the All-Japan Triple Crown, and he also gained the respect of Muto, who said: "Tenryu is one of the greatest wrestlers I've ever seen. I hope that he has a successful title reign." He didn't have a long reign—he lost to Kensuke Sasaki on January 4—but he's still a spectacular wrestler.

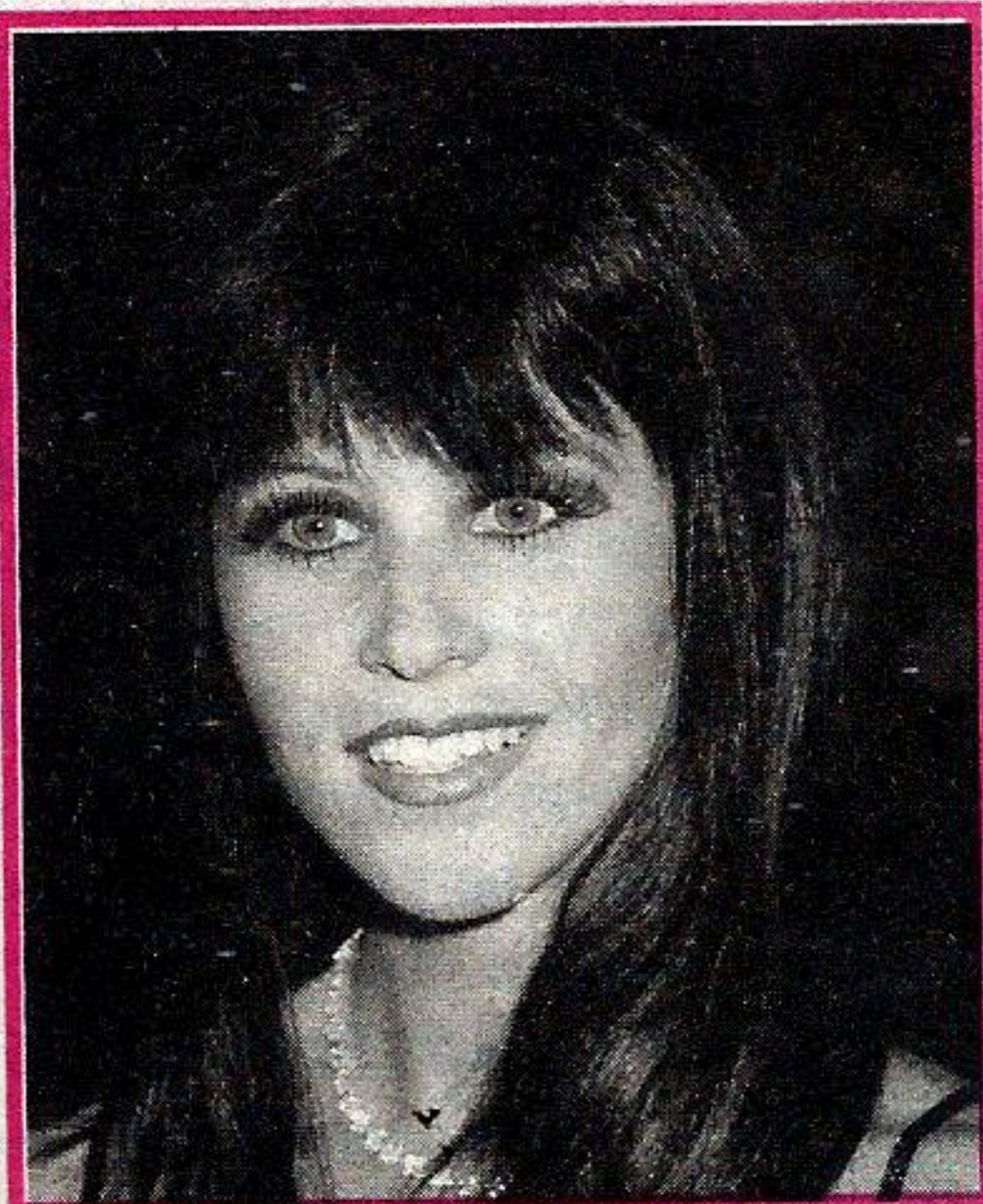
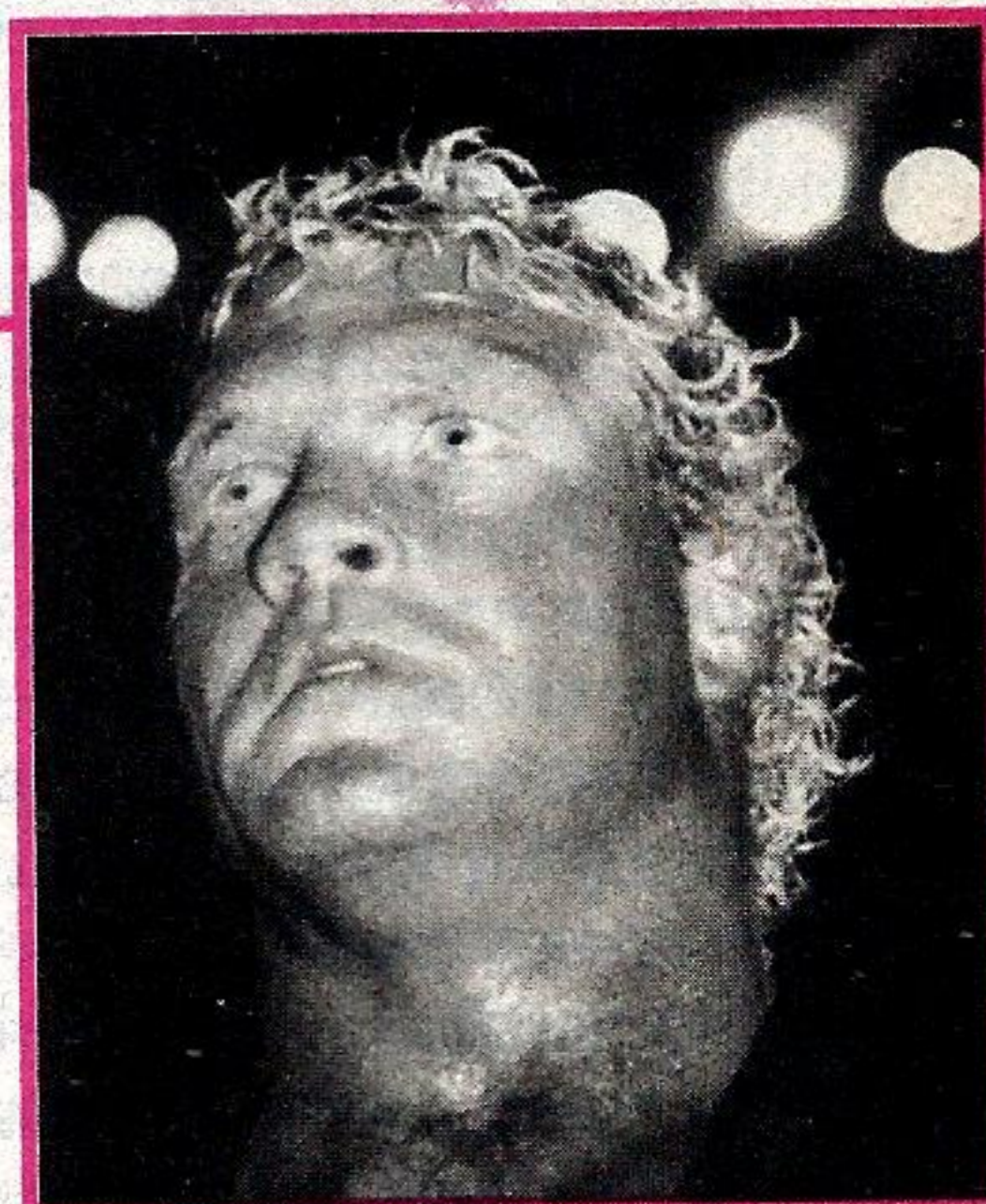


THUMB **Down**



Thumbs Down to Devon Storm. Now known as Crowbar, the former East Coast independent wrestler made a good career move when he jumped from the East Coast indies to WCW, but then negated that move by aligning himself with David Flair and Daphne—and changing his name to Crowbar in the process. Funny, but we didn't realize that Storm was such a nut case. With the jump from the independents to WCW, Storm apparently forgot about those insignificant aspects of wrestling, such as moves and countermoves, and began focusing on subtler matters, such as weapons. We liked him much better before.

Thumbs Down to Sid Vicious. Sid Vicious has always been a big, strong, muscular man, and years ago, opponents were filled with fear after taking one look at big Sid. His menacing glance, combined with his intimidating physique, drove helpless opponents to their knees before he laid one hand on them. But now look at what Sid does. He depends upon rulebreaking. He uses weapons. He sneak-attacks WCW World champion Bret Hart in the back of arenas. What Sid has done, in essence, is lower himself to the NWO's subterranean level. Once upon a time, we thought he had some pride. Times are a-changin'.



Thumbs Down to The Kat. These days, every time a scantily clad female steps into a WWF ring, we expect her to remove her top or show off her body in some kind of lewd manner. It seems that many women in the WWF have learned that the quickest way to stardom is to flash some skin. Certainly, The Kat went that route when she briefly removed her dress at the Armageddon pay-per-view. But we have a question for this beautiful young lady: What price for fame and fortune? Is it a proper tradeoff for a woman to gain the world but lose her soul?

Thumbs Down to Stephanie McMahon-Helmsley. To tell you the truth, we're not sure where she's coming from. We never know whose side she's really on, we never know who she really likes and who she really hates, and we never know what she's up to. Maybe that's the whole idea behind her way of doing business, but somehow we have the sickening feeling that she's just doing whatever it takes to get a rise out of the crowd or with whomever she's conspiring. We would've issued a warning to Triple-H but, well, we really don't care about Triple-H. And unless Stephanie starts standing for something, we won't care about her, either.



CORRESPONDENTS

Repöörts

Washington, DC (Correspondent—Frank Vitucci): WCW fans had been looking forward to the definitive match between Bret Hart and Bill Goldberg, but because of the treachery of Roddy Piper and the Powers-That-Be, their Starrcade bout wasn't it.

Goldberg dominated the early going with his power, but approximately four minutes into the match, referee Billy Silverman was knocked out, and Charles Robinson came down to ringside and began refereeing the bout in his place. Goldberg then suplexed Hart, but Hart's legs collided with Robinson, knocking him out as well.

This prompted Johnny Boone, the match's third referee, to come down and take over the officiating of the match. Hart slapped on his

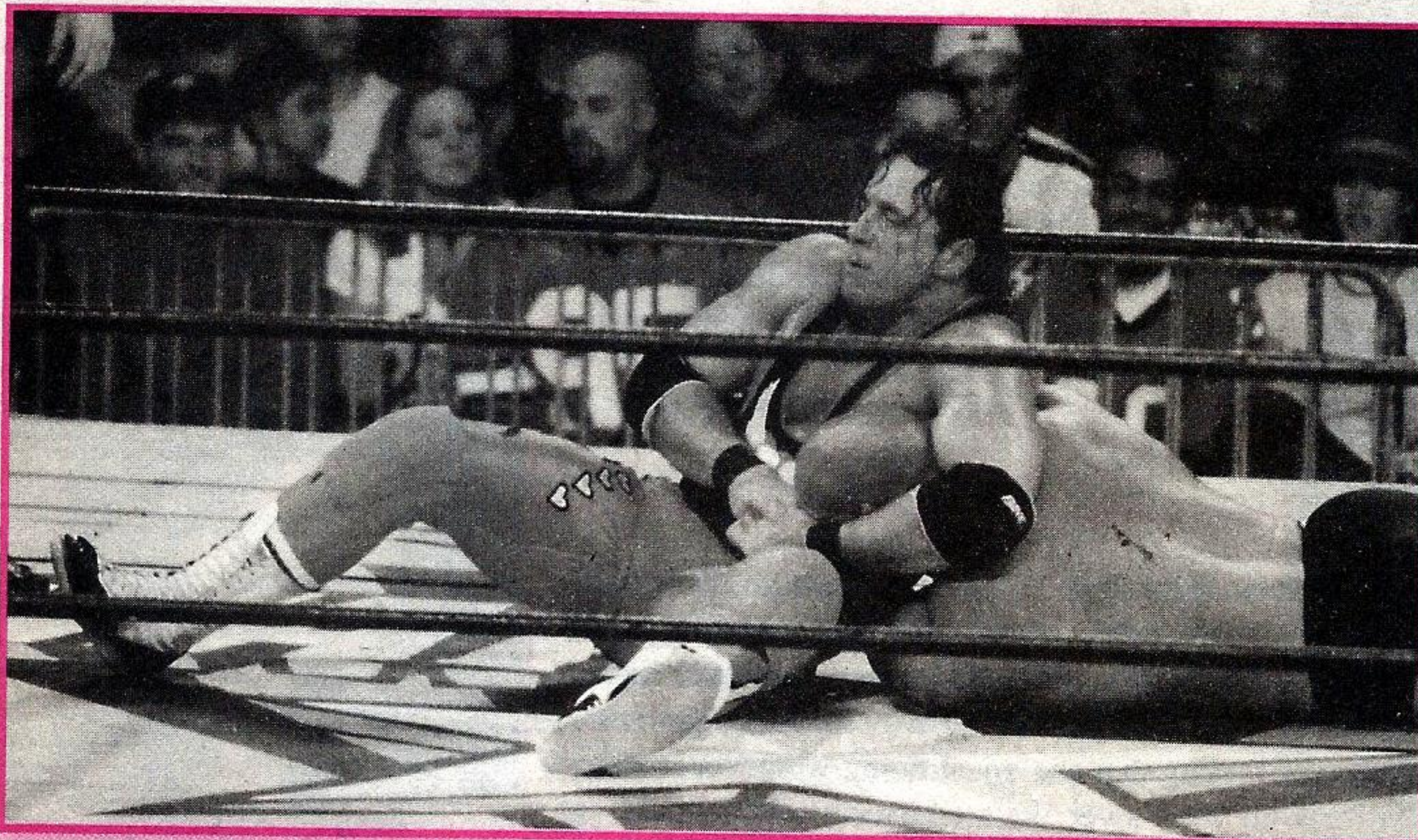
figure-four leglock around the ring-post, and then later in the match, he applied a figure-four on Goldberg in the middle of the ring. Goldberg, though, reversed the hold, and Hart had to make his way to the ropes to break it. Boone was then knocked unconscious by a wildly swinging Hart, and Piper came to ringside to work as the match's *fourth* referee. When Hart applied the sharpshooter, Piper immediately called for the bell, allowing Hart to retain his title even though Goldberg clearly never submitted.

In other bouts: Big Vito & Johnny the Bull (with Tony Marinara) defeated Disco Inferno & Lash LeRoux when Vito pinned LeRoux ... Madusa pinned WCW cruiserweight champion Evan

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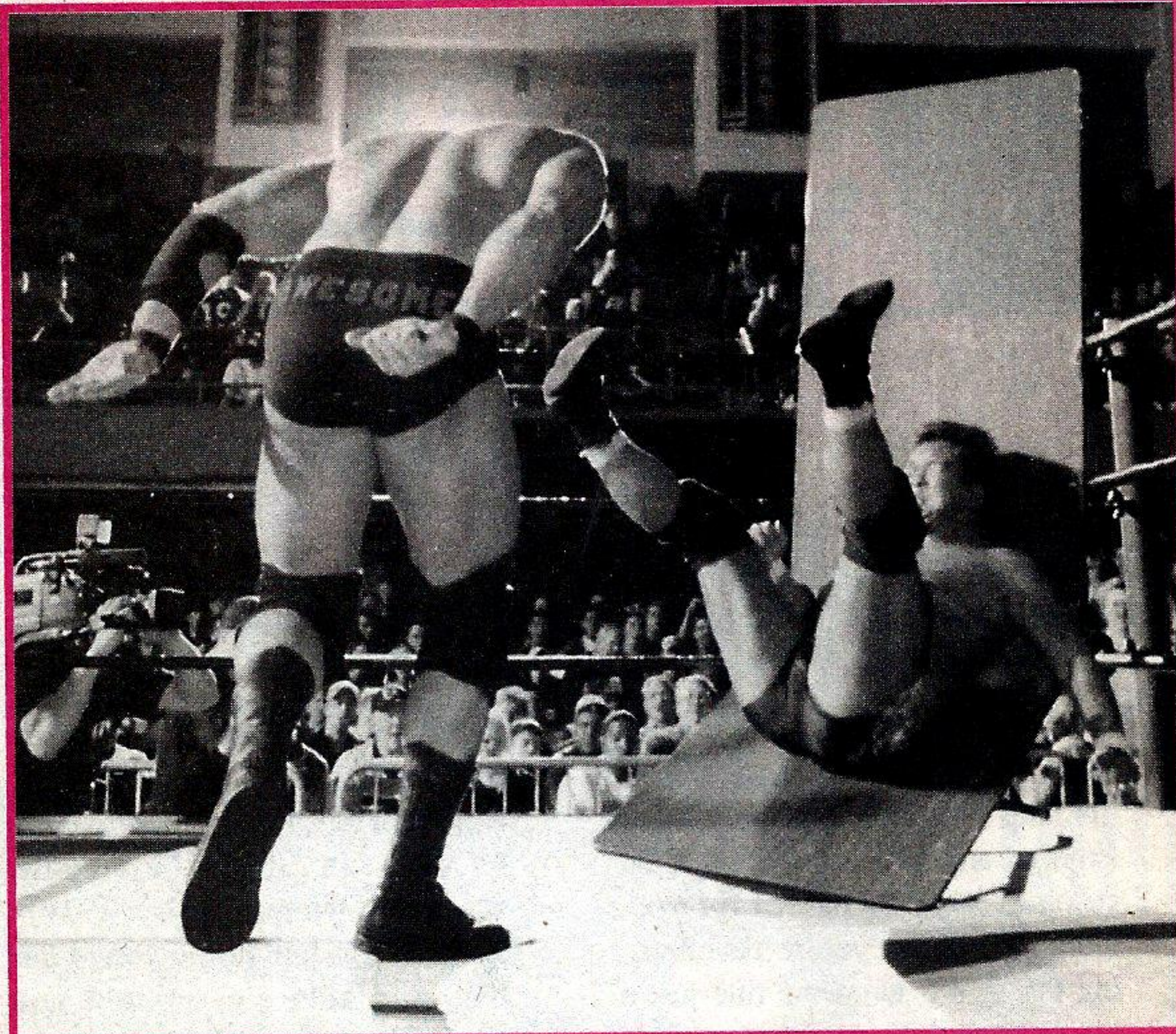
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Fantastico continued to control the match from there, and when Meanie fell to the mat, Fantastico distracted the referee, giving Bobcat the opportunity to wrap her hands around Meanie's throat. She did so, nearly choking the fan favorite out. The fans screamed for the official to stop Bobcat from interfering, but when he turned to warn Bobcat, Fantastico began choking Meanie along the ropes, and the blue-haired one's face quickly turned beet-red.

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CORRESPONDENTS

Repörts

Washington, DC (Correspondent—Frank Vitucci): WCW fans had been looking forward to the definitive match between Bret Hart and Bill Goldberg, but because of the treachery of Roddy Piper and the Powers-That-Be, their Starrcade bout wasn't it.

Goldberg dominated the early going with his power, but approximately four minutes into the match, referee Billy Silverman was knocked out, and Charles Robinson came down to ringside and began refereeing the bout in his place. Goldberg then suplexed Hart, but Hart's legs collided with Robinson, knocking him out as well.

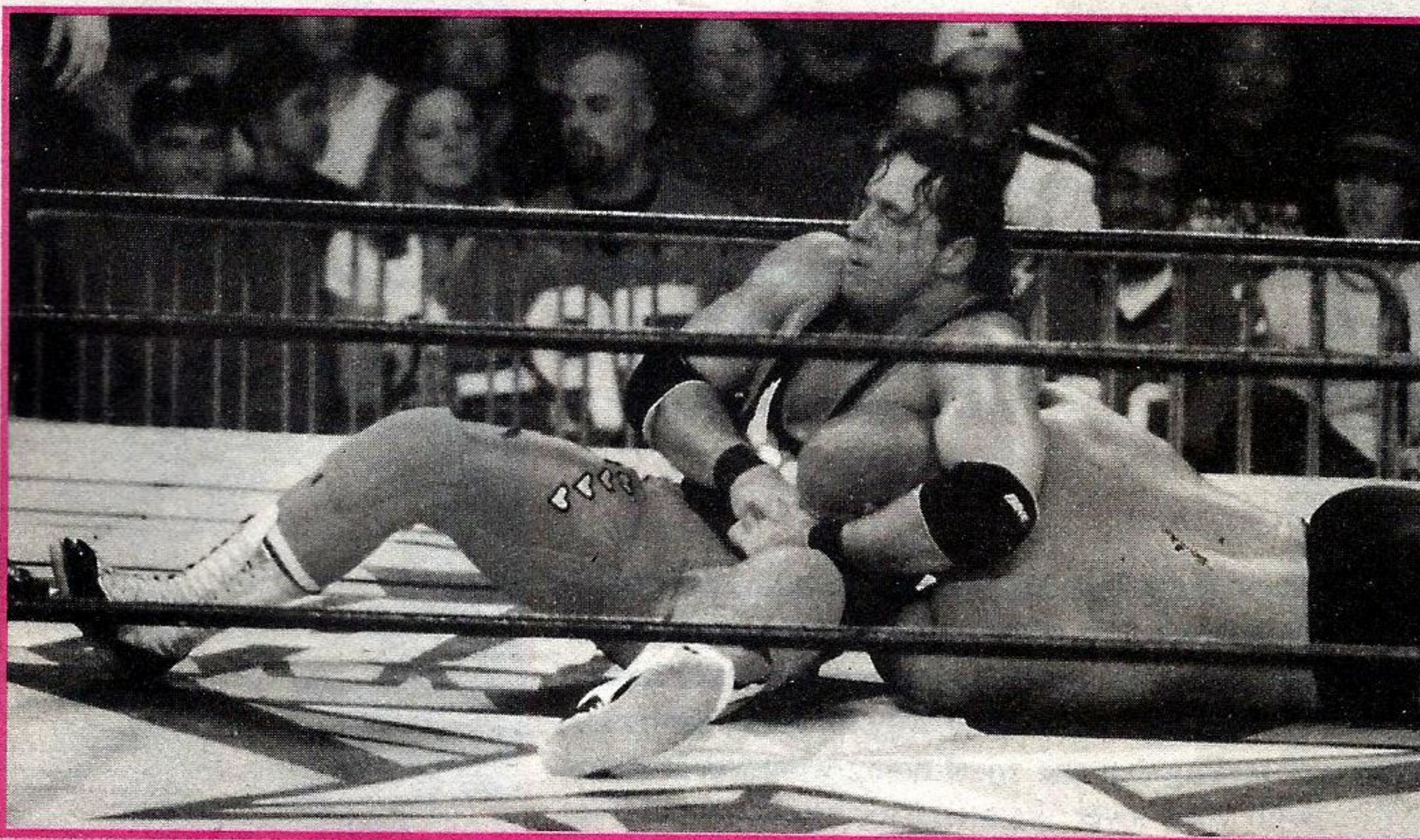
This prompted Johnny Boone, the match's third referee, to come down and take over the officiating of the match. Hart slapped on his

figure-four leglock around the ringpost, and then later in the match, he applied a figure-four on Goldberg in the middle of the ring. Goldberg, though, reversed the hold, and Hart had to make his way to the ropes to break it. Boone was then knocked unconscious by a wildly swinging Hart, and Piper came to ringside to work as the match's *fourth* referee. When Hart applied the sharpshooter, Piper immediately called for the bell, allowing Hart to retain his title even though Goldberg clearly never submitted.

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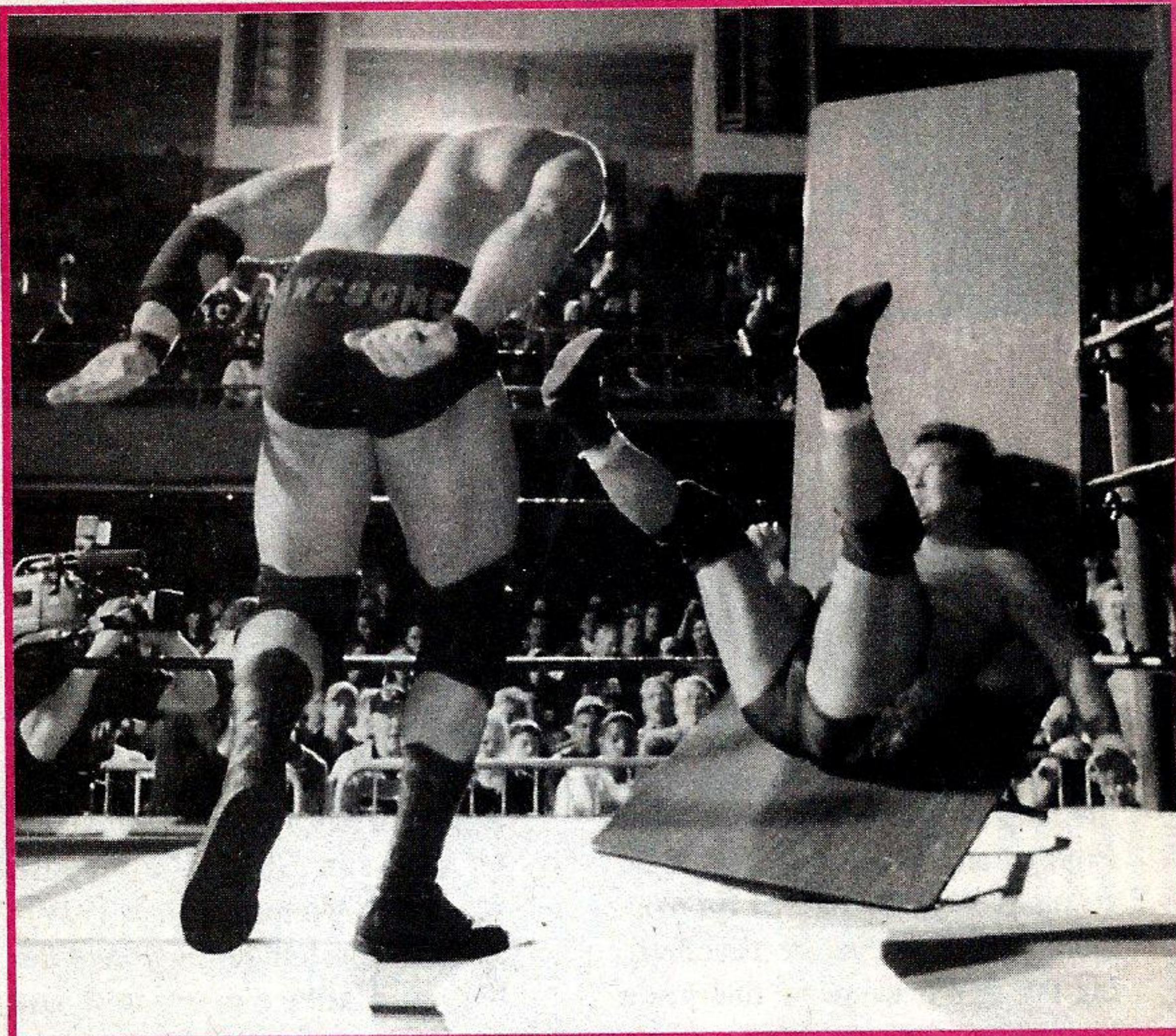
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YOU Asked Us

Q: "I would like to ask Miss Kitty a question. Kitty, you prance around the ring with much of your body exposed and you have Chyna fight so many of your battles for you. Don't you think you're besmirching the WWF women's title just a bit?"—Ann Bellamy, Fortesque, NJ

A: "Geez, Ann," Kitty replied, "it sounds to me like you're a little jealous of the success I'm having. I'm only giving the fans what they want—and that's a sexy and successful World Wrestling Federation women's champion. I clawed my way to the top of the WWF the hard way, and I'm not ashamed to admit that Chyna has

had a big influence on my career. If a woman can't learn a thing or two from her, they're not going to go very far. She's the biggest, strongest woman in the WWF, and I'd be a fool not to accept her help and advice every now and then. The bottom line here, Ann, is that I always find a way to keep my title, and I always look good doing it. What more could I possibly have to offer? Oh, and by the way, the name is The Kat now, not Miss Kitty. Get with the program, please."

...

Q: "My question is for 'Rowdy' Roddy Piper. Roddy, you were

always one of my favorite wrestlers, but I lost a lot of respect for you after you screwed Bill Goldberg out of the WCW World title at Starrcade '99. Why did you do it? I still can't understand it."—Jeremy Flynn, Boulder, CO

A: "You got me dead to rights, my friend," said Piper. "You got me dead to rights. I sold out, plain and simple. The Powers-That-Be dangled that carrot out there, and I moved right in and bit. I took the bait. I did it for the money, man. I'm not proud about what I did, and Bill Goldberg has forgiven me, thank God, but I have nobody to blame but myself. Hopefully me and Goldberg can get together and drive Russo and this new NWO right the hell out of WCW. Believe me, I can understand how my fans lost respect for me, but this hasn't been the first time the fans were mad at me, and I'll probably do a few more things that'll tick them off before my career is over. But I've been wrestling since I was 15 years old, so I know how to roll with the punches. We can't always be proud of everything we do. We just gotta do the best we can and deal with the consequences."

...

Q: "I've noticed that Creative Control have shed their suits and ties and have gone back to using their real
(Continued on page 55)



Miss Kitty—make that The Kat—(seen here with Chyna) has used her good looks and her tough friend to rise to the top of the WWF. And yes, she has looked good doing it.

Introducing

By Frank Krewda

SHANE HOOKER

THE SANDMAN BRINGS beer and cigarettes to the ring. The Godfather brings his ladies to the ring. And thanks to the editorial staff at London Publishing, North American Wrestling Alliance star Shane Hooker now brings a copy of the Holiday 1999 issue of *Pro Wrestling Illustrated* with him whenever he hits the ring. See, he likes to remind everyone where he placed in this year's "PWI 500."

"Right here, y'all," Hooker shouts to the crowd during a TV taping in Lynchburg, Virginia. "Mr. 387' is in the house." Hooker points to his name on page 70, but the chorus of boos indicates that the ringside fans aren't nearly as impressed with Hooker as he is with himself.

"Bet if I went back to kissing their behinds, the fans would start showing me the respect a true superstar, a universally ranked and world famous superstar, deserves," he complains out loud.

It's been a while since the 6'1", 210-pound Lynchburg native drew the respect of those who appreciated his humility and solid mat wrestling, but a soured relationship with NAWA owner James Wells changed Hooker's approach to the sport.

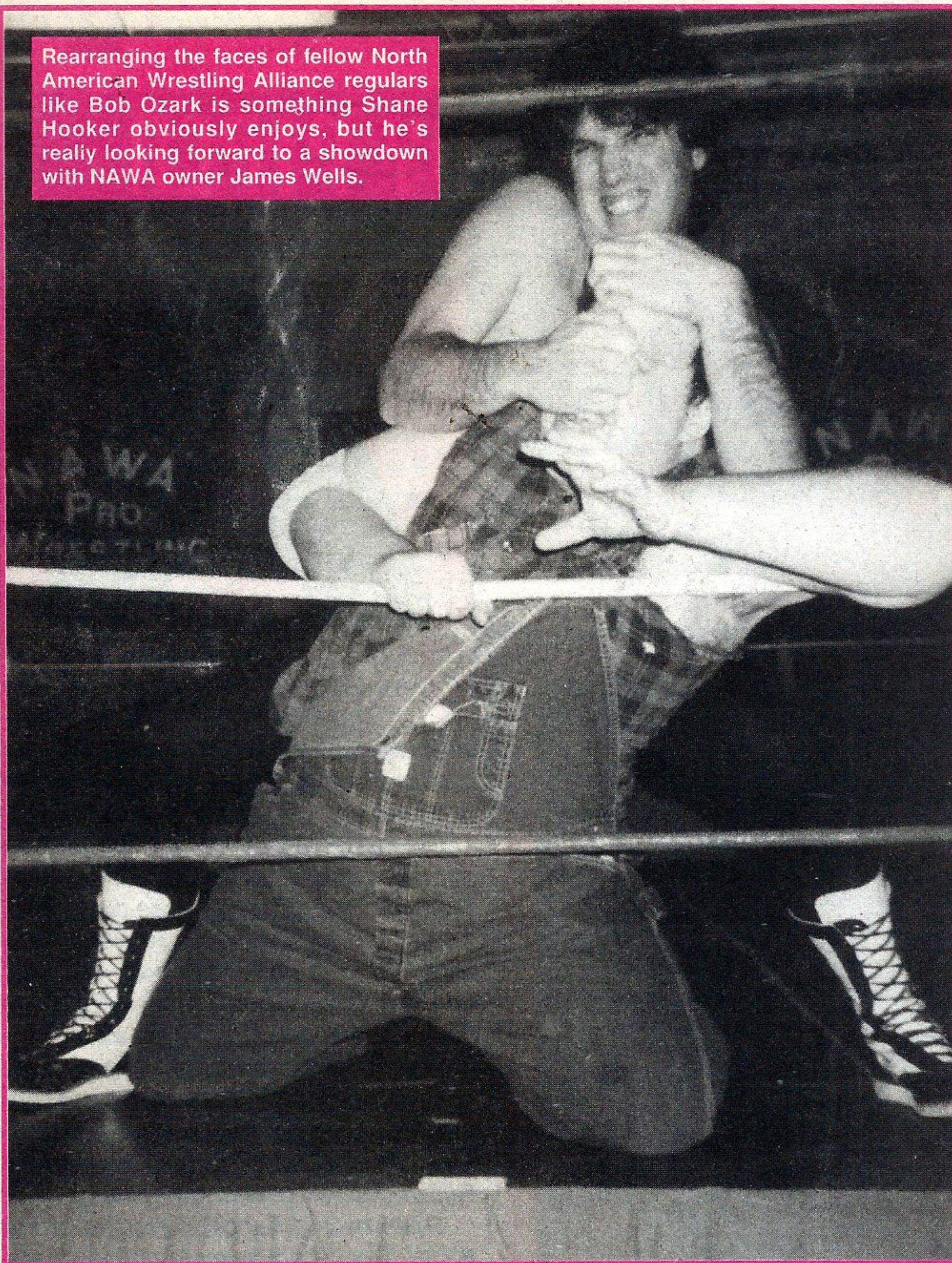
"Basically, I won a battle royal that made me the number-one contender for the heavyweight title," Hooker explains, "but Wells didn't want me to have the belt, so he made me wrestle my tag team partner, The Intimidator, in a steel cage match.

"You see, James trained me,



Shane Hooker ranked 387th in 1999's "PWI 500," and that number has gone straight to his head (not to mention the seat of his tights), angering NAWA officials and wrestlers alike. More smug than ever, Hooker refuses to let his detractors and one powerful critic hold him back

Rearranging the faces of fellow North American Wrestling Alliance regulars like Bob Ozark is something Shane Hooker obviously enjoys, but he's really looking forward to a showdown with NAWA owner James Wells.



then powerslammed Wells to the concrete floor, but he paid a steep price for that indiscretion. Wells fined Hooker \$1,500, which does not sound like a hefty sum until you consider that just about every cent Hooker earns goes to the care of his young son, Tommy, who suffers from cystic fibrosis.

"I really only want to make it big so I can help my boy," admits Hooker, who hopes to one day save enough money to pay for a delicate and expensive surgery that would drastically improve the condition of Tommy's lungs. "That's the only reason I want to make it big in this sport."

For the time being, Hooker must be content with battling other NAWA wrestlers. Judging by his dedication to the NAWA (Hooker competed briefly in Virginia's ACW in 1997), he's happy where he is, but no longer satisfied to merely compete for the heavyweight title. Ironically, he sees Wells, not fellow NAWA competitors, as the greatest obstacle to the title. So convinced is Hooker that Wells is out to

and I guess he got jealous of all the success I was having, so he tried to destroy my career. That's when I stopped caring about what other people thought and decided that I'll never let Wells or anybody else stop me from winning that heavyweight title."

When it comes to Hooker's success, there's been plenty for Wells to be jealous of. Over the course of his five-year stint in the NAWA, Hooker, 30, has racked up every federation title except the TV belt.

"True, Shane had a lot of success, but it went right to his head," Wells said. "He forgot who helped

him get to the top. I had to knock him down a few notches and teach him some humility. I used The Intimidator, his best friend—make that his *former* best friend—to do it."

The result has been an ugly feud between the former tag team champs, and a series of title matches in which Hooker has come very close to unseating The Intimidator as NAWA heavyweight champ. In fact, Hooker defeated The Intimidator on December 4, but Wells reversed the decision because Hooker had used a fireball earlier in the match. Hooker

get him that he predicts a showdown with his former mentor—and sooner than later,

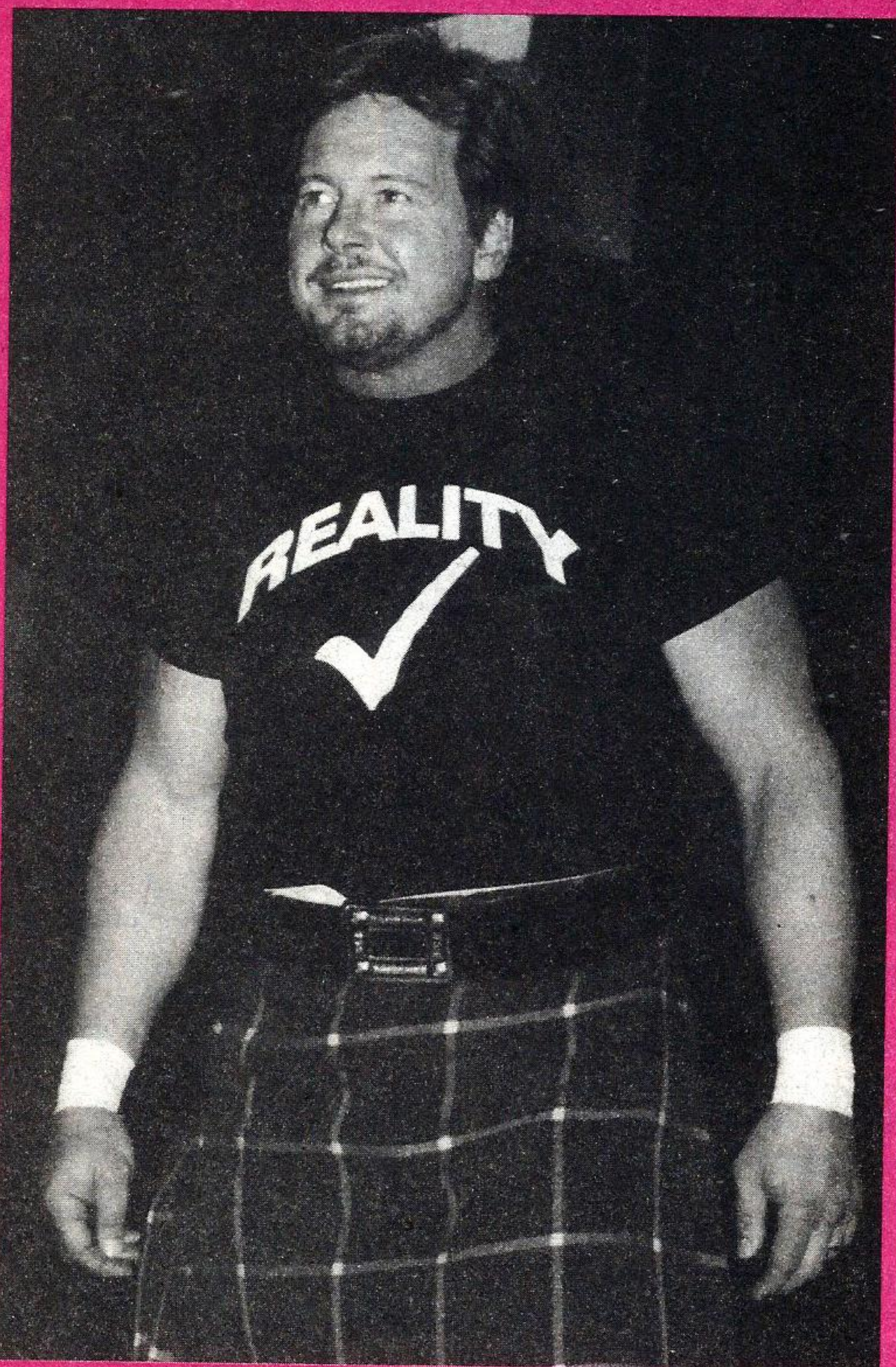
"We're gonna go at it, simple as that. I just hope Wells doesn't pull any of that legal crap to get me thrown out of the NAWA. The people here are stupid and all, but I'm kind of used to wrestling for them, you know," Hooker admits.

Then, with his sentimental side back under wraps, Hooker decides, "The hell with Wells and the hell with the NAWA. I can get a job wrestling for any promotion I want, I'm the 387th best wrestler in the world!" □

Q

RODDY PIPER

A



THE T-SHIRT Roddy Piper frequently wears bears a phrase "The Rowdy Scot" should consider as sound career advice—reality check. Piper has been without direction in recent months.

These days, it seems no one (maybe not even Piper himself) is really sure of Piper's role in WCW. He has clearly fallen out of favor with the Powers-That-Be. With both Hulk Hogan on Ric Flair on the sidelines, Piper is left without the two men who have been his most competitive rivals (and in the case of Flair, one of his closest friends). Does Piper want to go on being a special guest referee for mud matches and other Vince Russo-devised gimmick matches?

Does he still hunger for shots at the WCW World heavyweight title, a championship that somehow eluded his grasp, even after he managed to defeat then-champion Hogan several times in 1996 and 1997? Does Piper see himself as one of the old-timers the Powers-That-Be have alienated, such as Paul Orndorff, Arn Anderson, and Larry Zbyszko—or just another competitor who can't seem to get a title shot or a break?

Piper needs to take a reality check and determine where he fits in in WCW. Piper agreed to answer some questions from Senior Writer Dan Murphy before a recent **Nitro** broadcast. Predictably, many of Piper's answers raised more questions than they answered.

Q: So, Roddy, what's on the agenda for tonight? Do you have any idea what's in store for you tonight?

A: (*Piper answers in an animated rant*) If they want ratings, brother, then Russo and (WCW Executive Vice President Bill) Busch and the entire damn Executive Committee will have Roddy Piper on TV for the whole show. I don't care if we go two hours or three or four or six. Let's show the world in Piper-vision—full Technicolor, all the better to see the blood-red hues and bright gold belts, brother! Piper is all about ratings. In Scottish, they use the word "Roddy" to mean "rat-ings." Coincidentally, they call Hogan "haggis."

Q: Well, you certainly seem very excited—

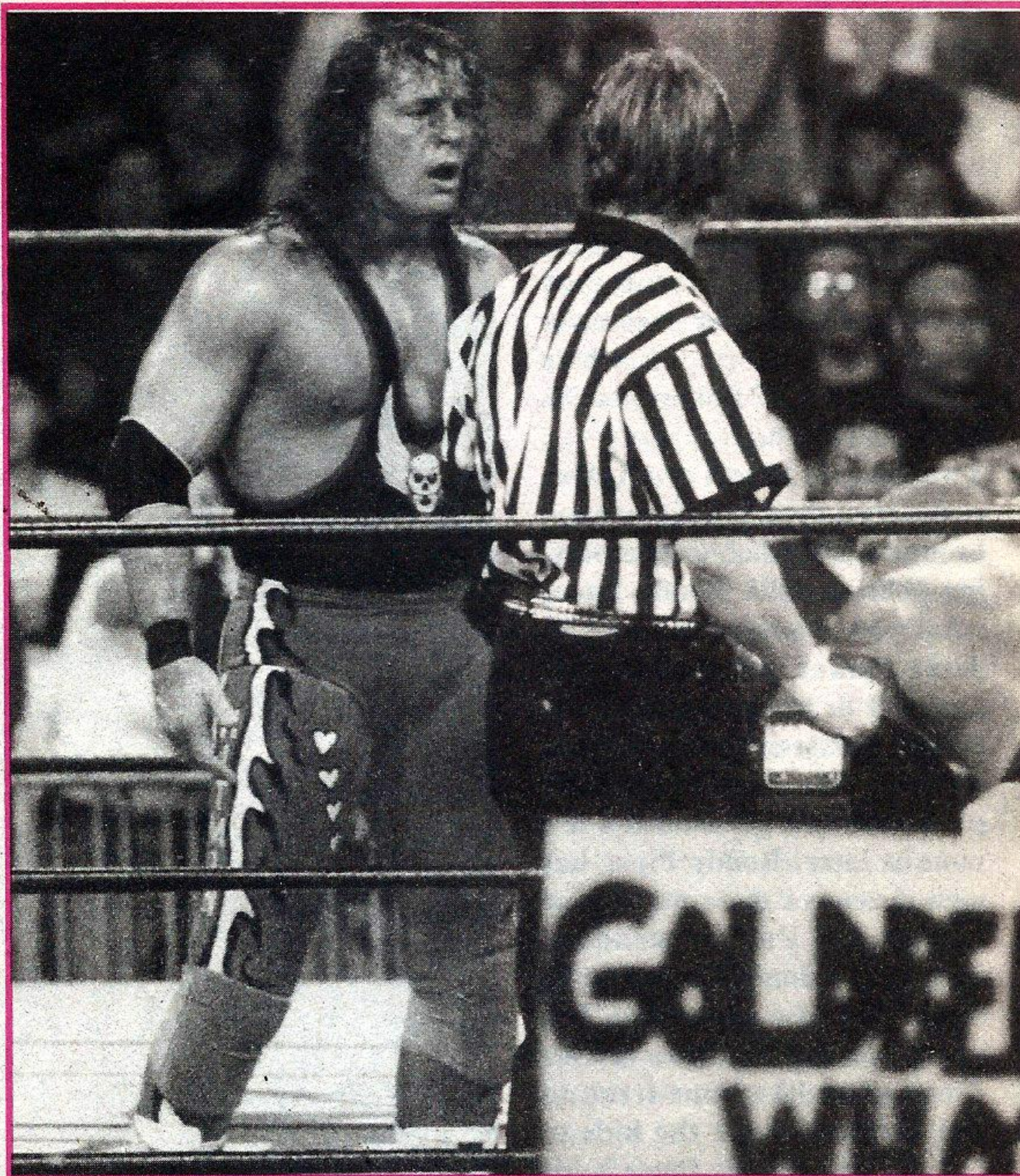
A: What's not to be excited about? When you're Roddy Piper, the world is an exciting place. When you're not kicking butt in WCW, you're out filming the next summer blockbuster. Have you ever seen *Hell Comes To Frogtown*?

Q: Actually, I've never seen a copy at my local Blockbuster.

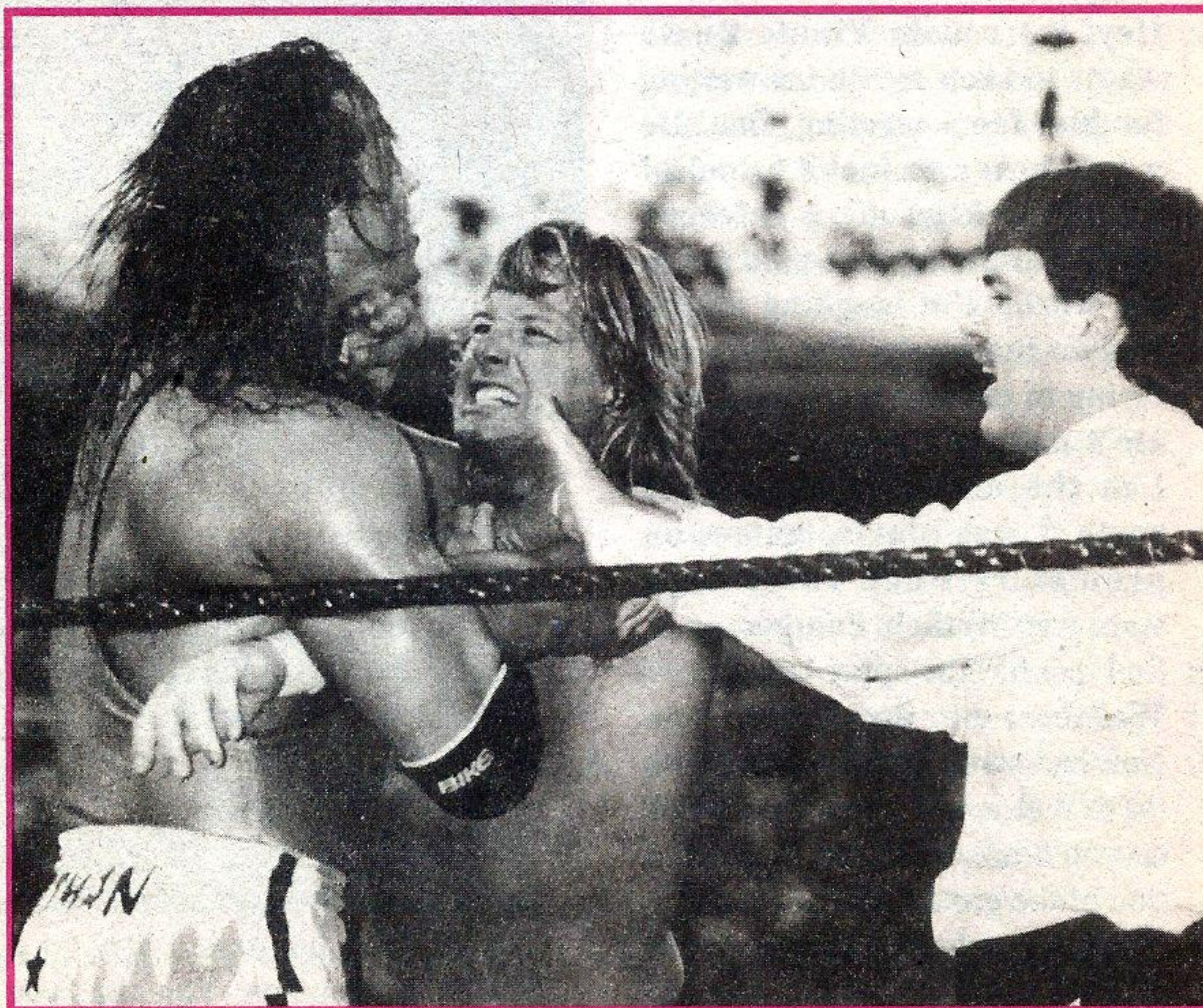
A: That's because it's always rented out. You've got to get on the waiting list to see *Hell Comes To Frogtown*. I hear the waiting list for *They Live* is six years long. Now aren't you going to ask me any questions? I don't have all day! I'm supposed to meet with Russo in half an hour, and Roddy Piper doesn't like to keep any man waiting or any woman wanting. So ask me about my career already.

Q: Have you even taken a breath yet?

A: Just be happy you brought that tape recorder, because your hand would be cramped into a knot if you were takin' notes. I've got a lot on my mind these days, and when Roddy Piper's got a lot on his mind, you probably know that he does a lot of talking. Maybe I'll walk out there tonight and reintroduce



Bret Hart pretended to be upset with Roddy Piper for prematurely stopping his match with Goldberg at Starrcade (above). A night later, Piper found out what the master plan was. The contempt he felt for Hart when they were feuding in the WWF in 1992 (below) doesn't compare to the contempt he feels now.



the fans to the old "Piper's Pit."

Q: Really?

A: No. Not tonight.

Q: Uh, okay then. You don't seem to be a favorite of the Powers-That-Be, even though you're one of the most recognized wrestlers in the world. You would think they would be falling over themselves to get you in the ring. But here you are, kind of floating out in limbo. Why is that?

A: Two reasons. First of all, I've never been the kind of guy to go around kissing babies and playing politics. With Roddy Piper, what you see is what you get. That makes a lot of people angry. I'm no corporate butt-kisser. I've seen too many suits walk in like they owned the place and then get canned a few months later. Roddy Piper has seen dozens of these pups come and go, and I'm still standing. Secondly, I don't pretend to be some kind of a superhero. I'm not painting my face up or dressing up like some freak to sell T-shirts or get the kids to buy my doll. Roddy Piper is his own man, and as long as I am, these Powers won't be my biggest fans.

Q: Are you comfortable with that?

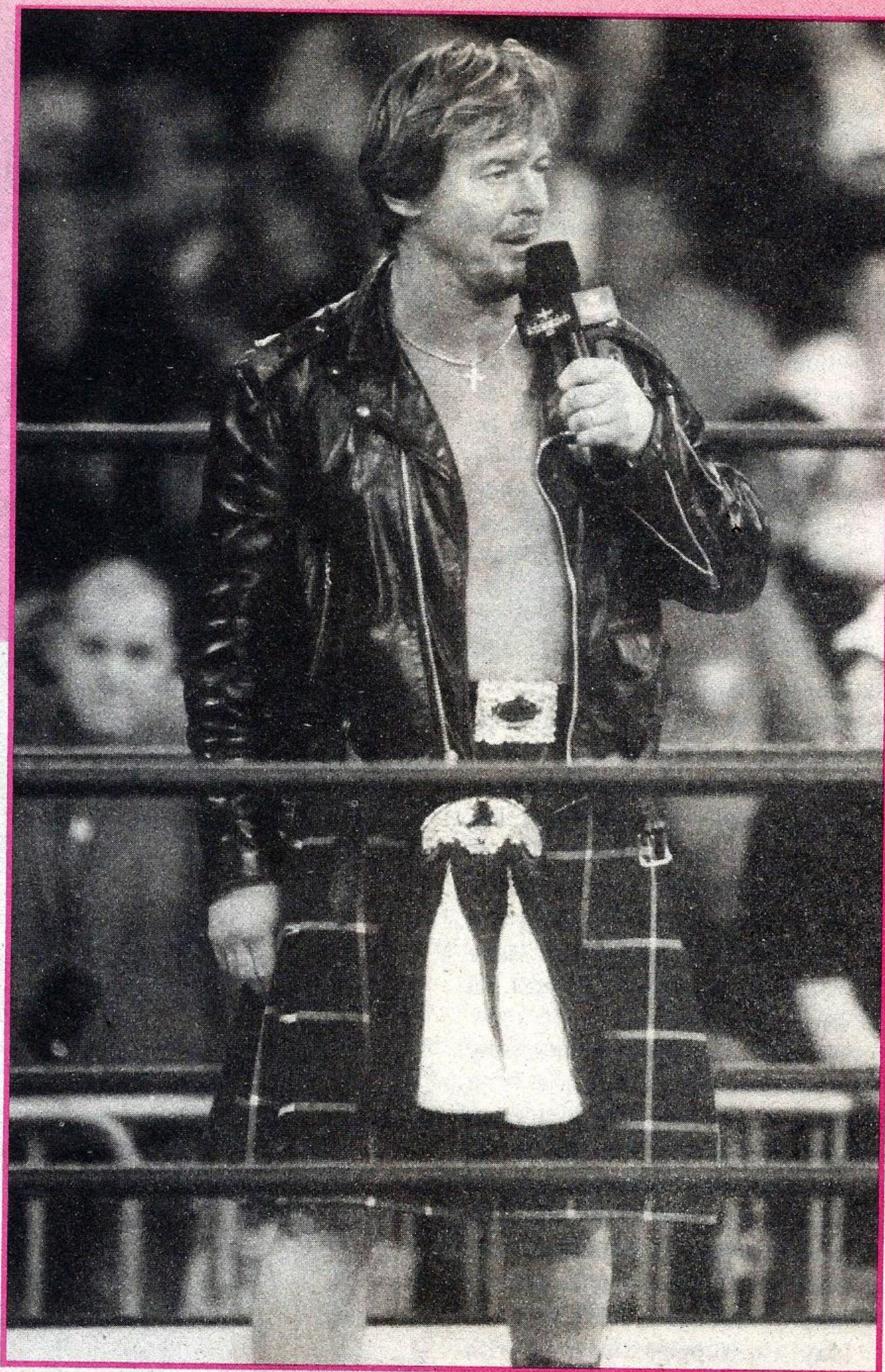
A: Hey, my cousin Vinnie Russo wants to keep me on ice waiting for him for a meeting, fine. He wants to try to make a fool of me by making me a referee? Fine. I'm the highest-paid ref in the world. I'm laughing all the way to the bank. The suits are trying to get under my skin, and ain't nobody can get to Piper. I'm the master of the head game. I was playin' games on promoters when these boys were wettin' their Pampers.

Q: So Piper has the upper hand?

A: Was there ever any doubt?

Q: You had some brutal run-ins with the NWO a few years ago. What do you think of this latest incarnation of the group?

A: (*Finally calming down*) Honestly, I think it's more danger-



Piper offered a sincere apology to the fans for his actions at Starrcade when he addressed the crowd the next night at *Nitro*. He's still beating himself up for doing Vince Russo's bidding.

ous. The Outsiders and Scott Steiner are overrated, but now that Bret Hart and Jeff Jarrett are in there, I think the NWO finally has the skills to back up some of their threats.

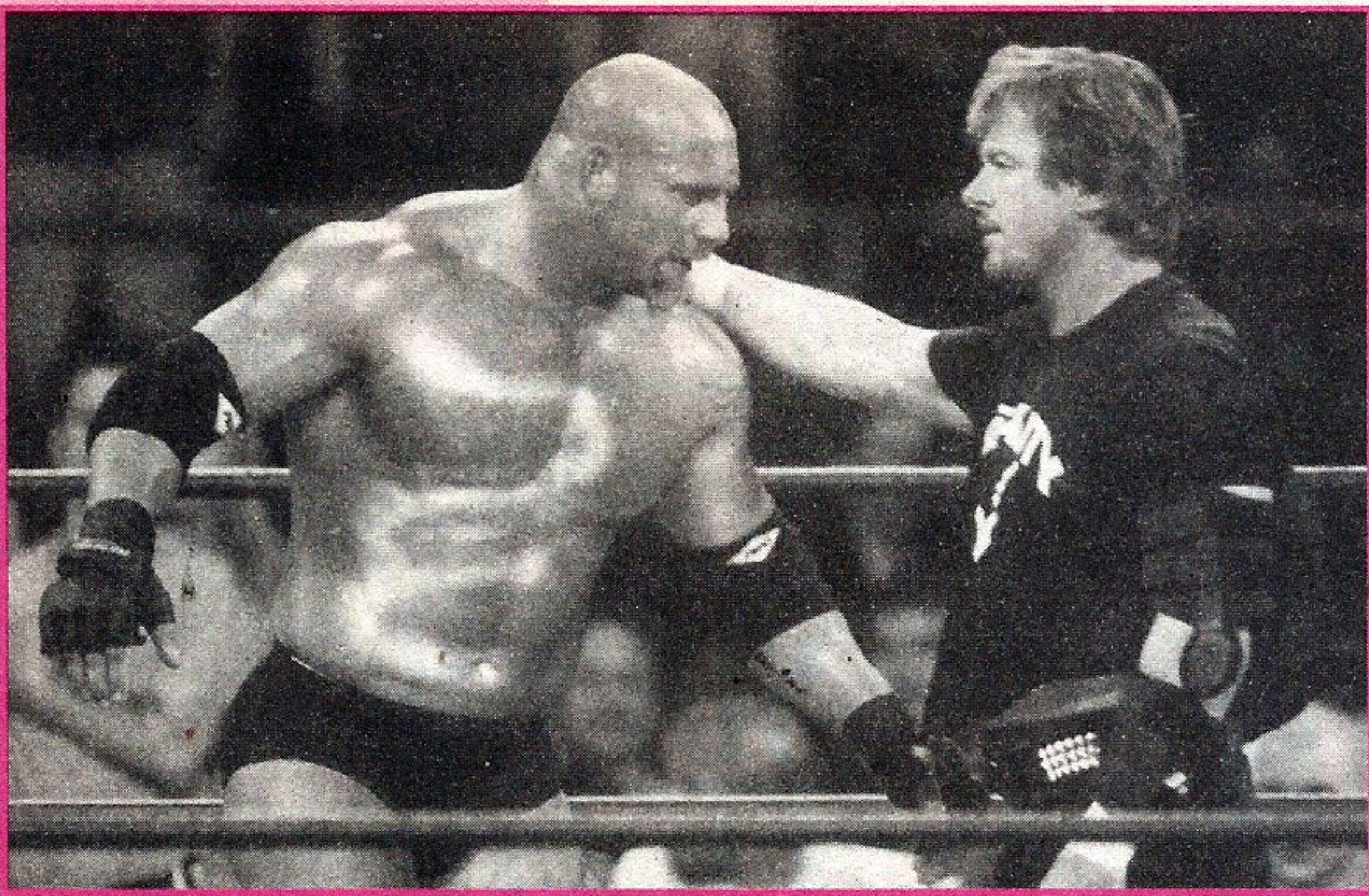
Q: Considering the relationship you've had with Bret Hart over the years, it must have pretty painful for you personally to watch what happened with the NWO re-formation. You and Bret

were pretty good friends at one time.

A: I told people after that happened that I'm embarrassed to call myself a wrestler. I'm embarrassed to call myself a wrestler! Roddy Piper is embarrassed to be a wrestler. Have you ever heard such a thing?

Q: Never thought I'd hear you say that.

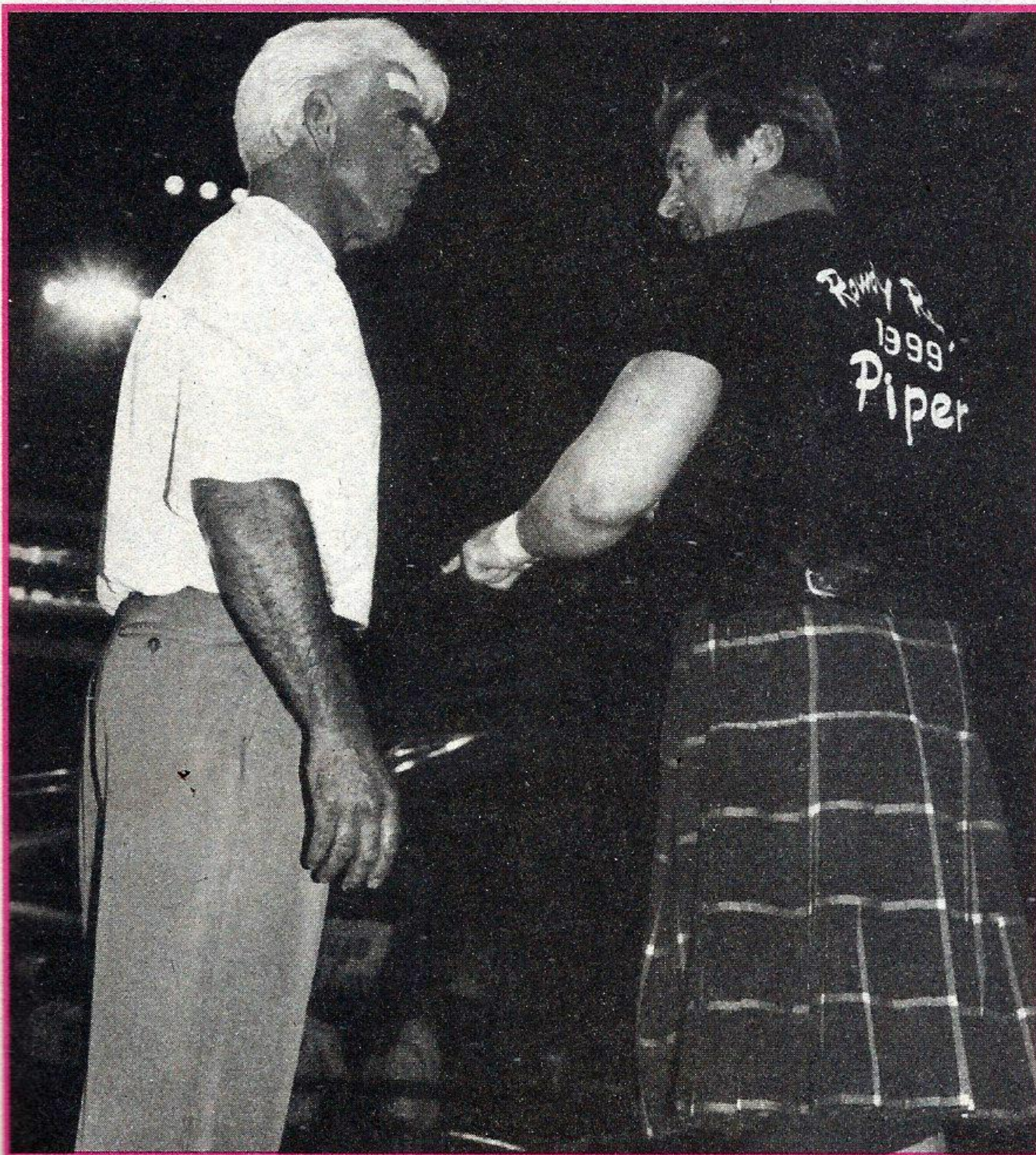
A: For someone like Bret Hart to



Goldberg accepted Piper's apology the night after *Nitro*. Piper, though, plans to do more to make up for his poor judgment at Starrcade.

be a part of something like that, man, it really hurts. You know that "best there is, best there was, best there ever will be" line Bret's always spoutin'? There's

some truth in that, I think. Bret Hart's gotta be right up there with the all-time greats. Always liked doin' things the right way, too, 'cause that's the way his



Ric Flair and Piper may be nearing the ends of their respective careers, but if they could join forces one more time, they could do some damage to the new NWO.

mom and dad taught him to do things. For him to be a part of something like this at this stage of his career—well, like I said, it just hurts.

Q: But you were a part of it, too. You stopped the Bret Hart-Bill Goldberg match at Starrcade when it was clear that Goldberg didn't submit.

A: That's really what made me I say I'm embarrassed to call myself a wrestler. I've done a lot of things in my career that I'm not real proud of now, but I never sold out like that. Going along with part of Russo's plan was the stupidest thing I've done. I sold out. I'm guilty. I just hope I get a chance to do something about it.

Q: Are you planning on making a run for either the World or U.S. titles?

A: Would I be in this arena tonight if I wasn't? I'm a patient man. My time will come. I know that the cream always rises to the top. Bret Hart and me had a classic match back at WrestleMania IX. I think we're still evenly matched. And I know I can teach Jarrett a thing or two. You know why Roddy Piper is still the most dangerous man in WCW?

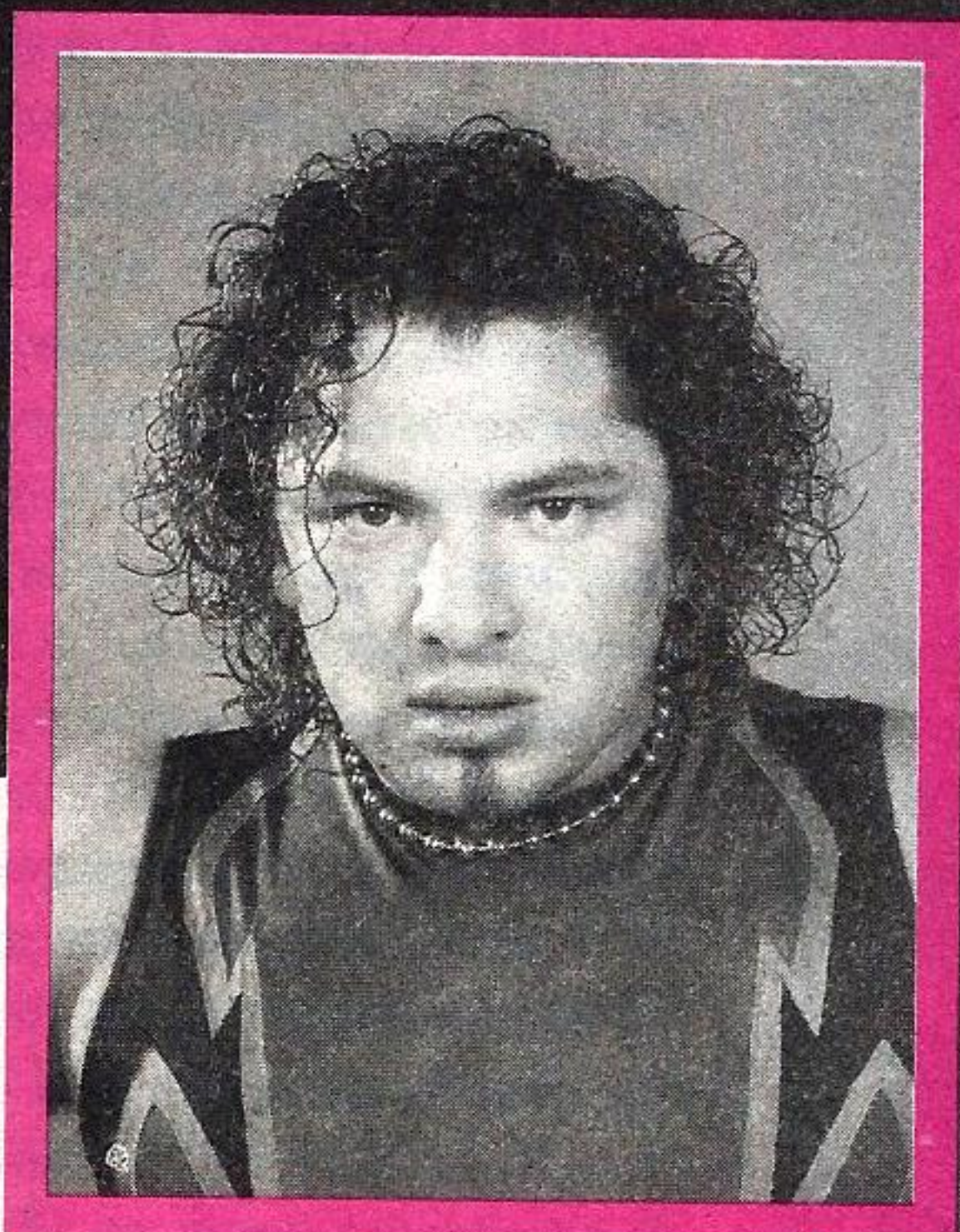
Q: I'm sure you're about to tell me.

A: Damn straight I'm about to tell you. See, I know some things no one else knows about. I know about some people waiting in the wings to take this NWO apart. I know a "retired" guy who has his eye on Jarrett. I had lunch with David Flair the other day, and we shared a little shop talk. And tonight, who knows? Maybe I'll wax Russo's car. Maybe I'll break his arm. Maybe I'll put Hart to sleep. Maybe I'll wax the NWO limousine. Maybe the "Nature Boy" and I will expose The Outsiders for the frauds they are. Who knows? I'm not even sure yet. If you excuse me, I've got a meeting with the Powers-That-Be. It's time to get rowdy. □

X-Ray

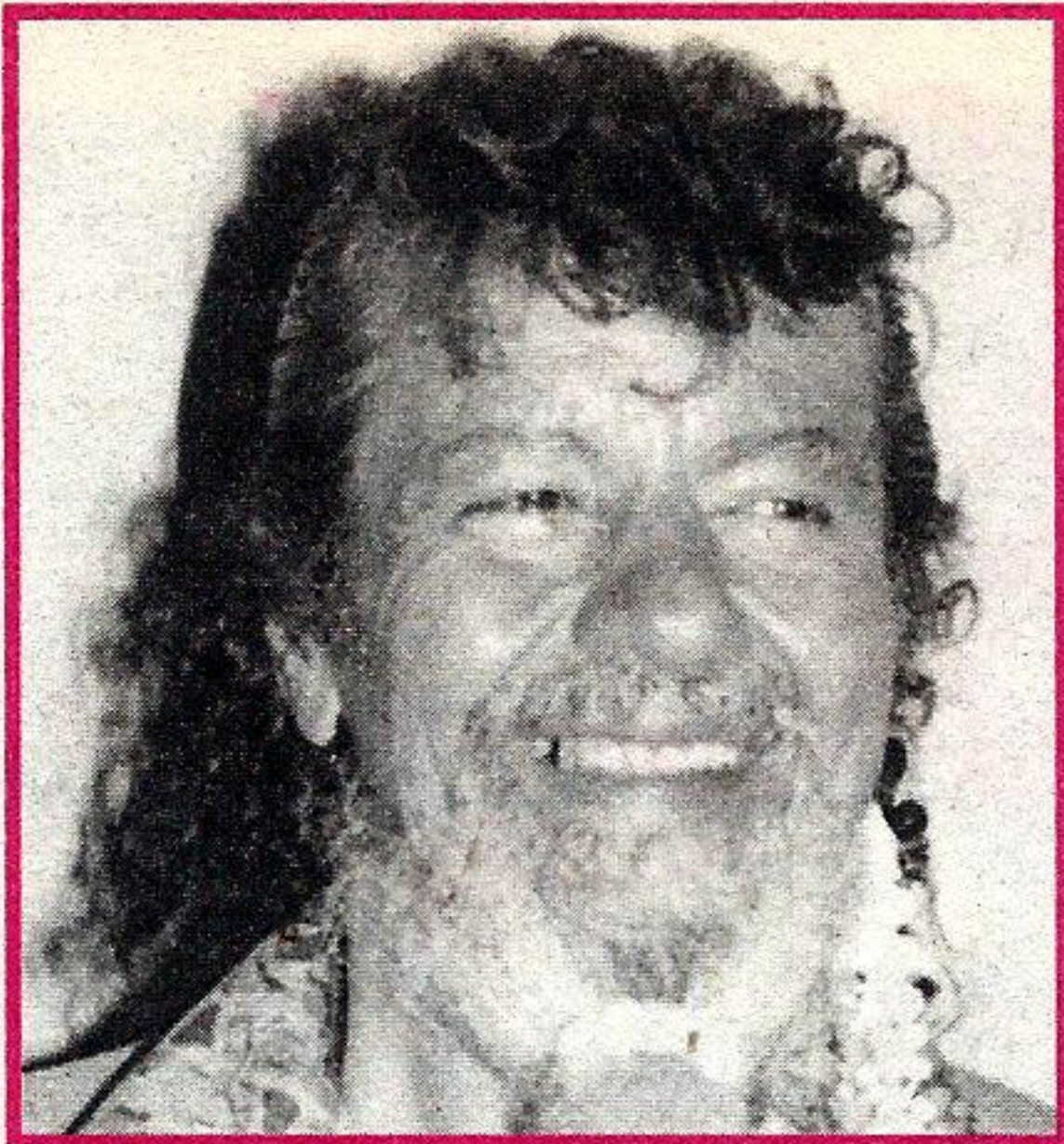
THE WRESTLER PANEL EXAMINES

**SUPER
CRAZY**



There's more to Super Crazy's game than moonsaults, as members of our "X-Ray" panel point out, and even more to like about this high-flying ECW star.





CAPT. LOU ALBANO

"I haven't seen too much of Super Crazy, but from what I've seen, I can tell you that this kid lives up to his name. He's a super wrestler, and he does some really crazy things out there—like all those moonsaults. His only fault is that he plays to the crowd too much. He has to be careful about that because those ECW fans could turn against him in a second. Nothing wrong with pleasing the crowd, daddy, but winning has to come first. He might learn that the hard way."

Capt. Lou Albano, "The Guiding Light" has managed 13 different tag teams to a record 17 WWF World tag team titles.



KILLER KOWALSKI

"What the hell kind of a name is Super Crazy? That's two adjectives! Doesn't make much sense to me, and neither does his wrestling style. Even when Mil Mascaras was dancing all over the ring, I never went for that acrobatic stuff. It looks pretty, but that's about all. Somebody in ECW better teach him how to throw a clothesline or use an eye rake, or better yet, swing a chair. Hell, they don't have any rules in ECW, so he should learn how to take advantage of that."

Killer Kowalski, one of the most sadistic rule-breakers in the history of the sport, runs a wrestling school in Malden, Massachusetts.



MASSA SAITO

"There are few wrestlers in the sport who can boast a background as complete as Super Crazy's. He is well-versed in many wrestling styles and skilled in each one. His aerial maneuvers are breathtaking, and he owns one of the stiffest kicks in the sport. But I question his heart. He's been in ECW for over a year and hasn't even come close to winning a title. That tells me he has lost motivation, and without that, he is just going through the motions."

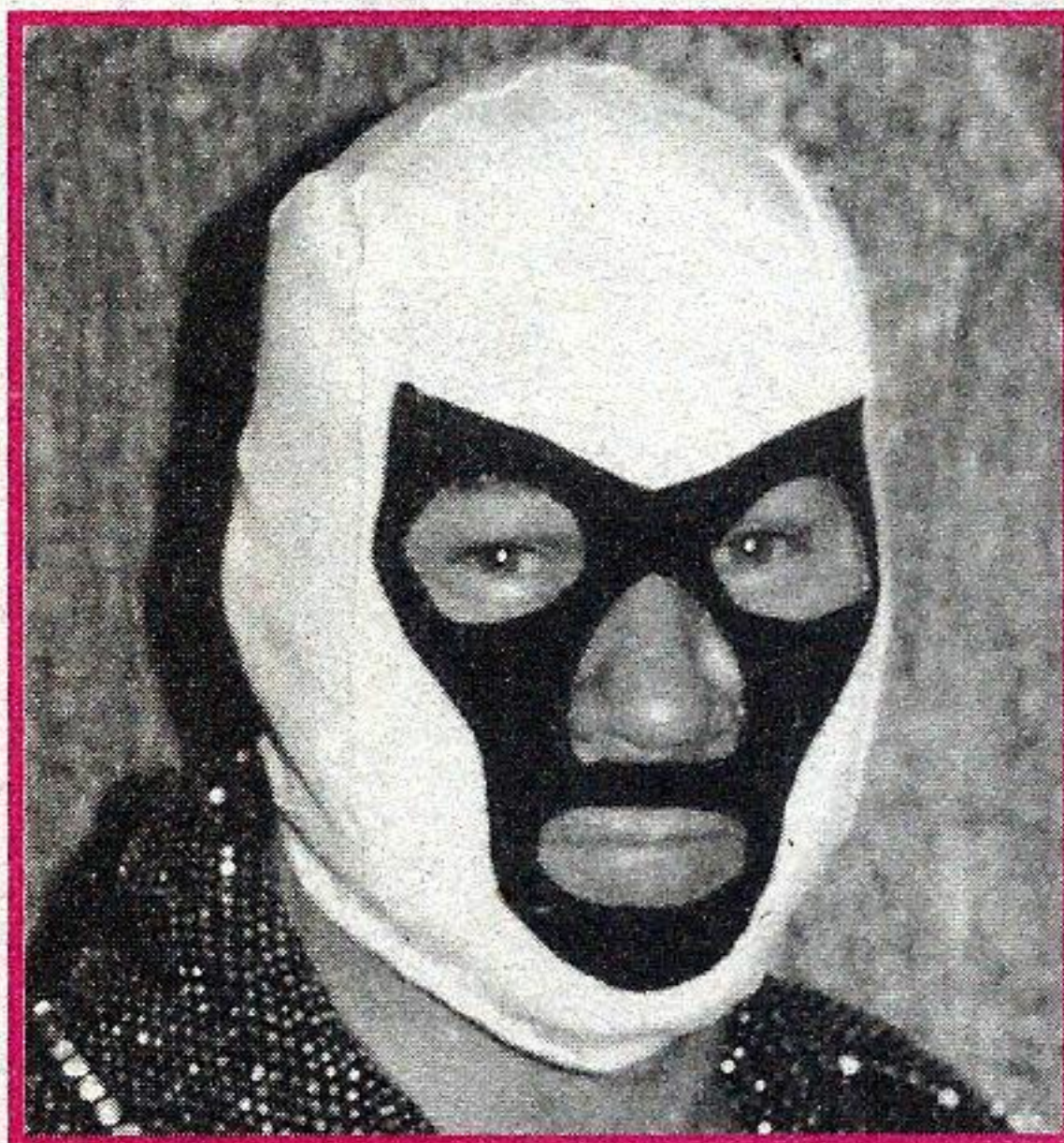
Massa Saito, a former AWA World heavyweight and WWF tag team champion, recently retired after a 24-year career.



FABULOUS MOOLAH

"Super Crazy ... I like the sound of that, hon. Sounds like somebody you don't want to tangle with. I've only seen this kid wrestle a few times, and I mean he is absolutely fearless in that ring. I hear that he'll do one of them moonsaults from just about anywhere in the building. From what I understand, it's just a matter of time before this kid becomes a big star. I'd really love to see him come to the WWF more often. I like to watch hot, young wrestlers, darlin'."

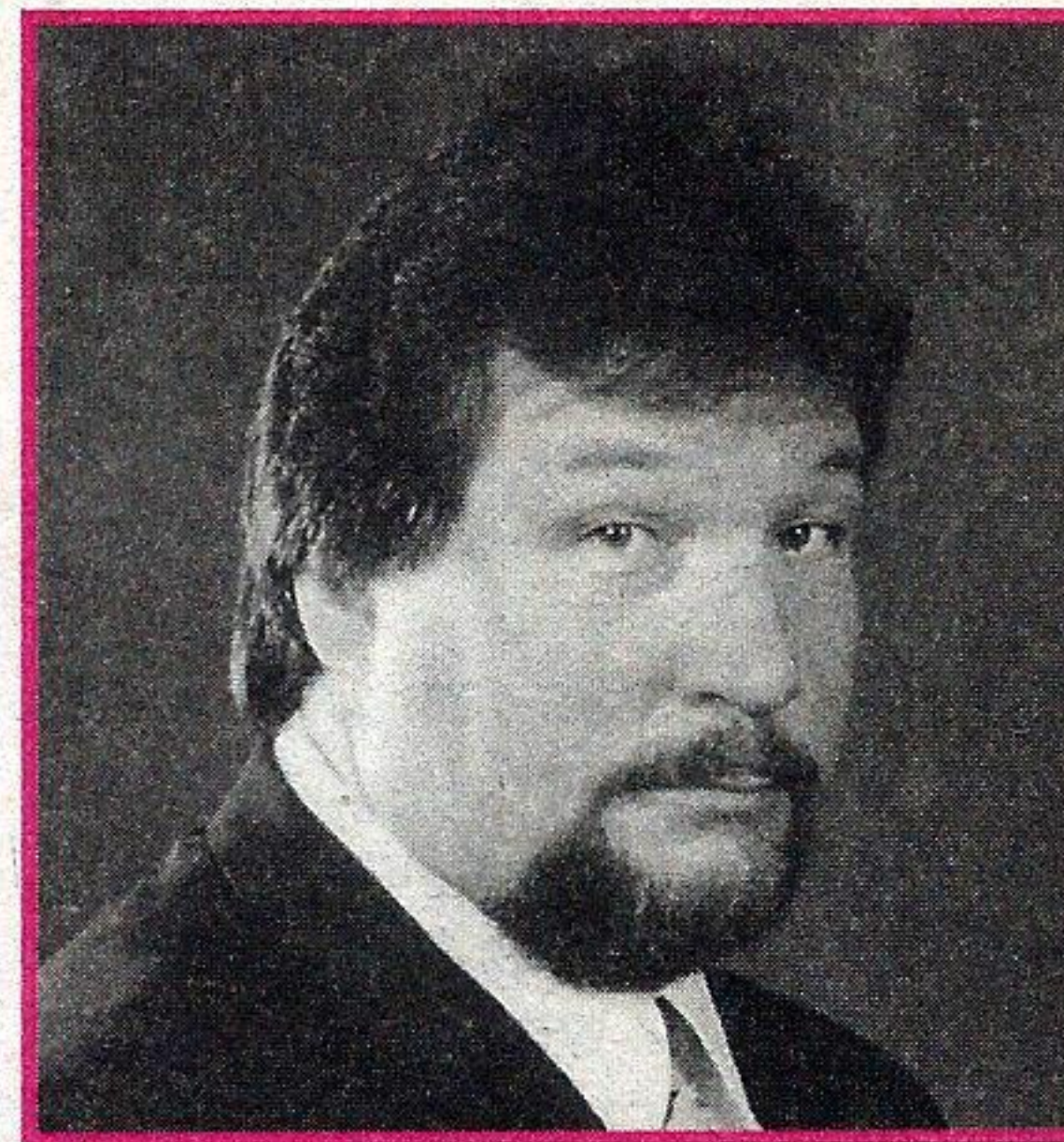
Fabulous Moolah, the finest woman wrestler in history, held the World title for 28 years. She is now a trainer and a part-time competitor.



MR. WRESTLING II

"If wrestlers with Super Crazy's skills really are the future of wrestling, then the future sure looks bright. There's a lot to like about this kid. Fast, daring, and tough, and willing to take all sorts of risks. This kid's got it all. I'd like to see him make a run at Rob Van Dam's TV belt. Maybe get some experience wrestling in high-pressure matches, but as far as I'm concerned, Super Crazy has nothing but time to get better, and when he does, look out!"

Mr. Wrestling II, one of wrestling's most popular and accomplished stars, held many regional tag team and singles titles throughout the South.



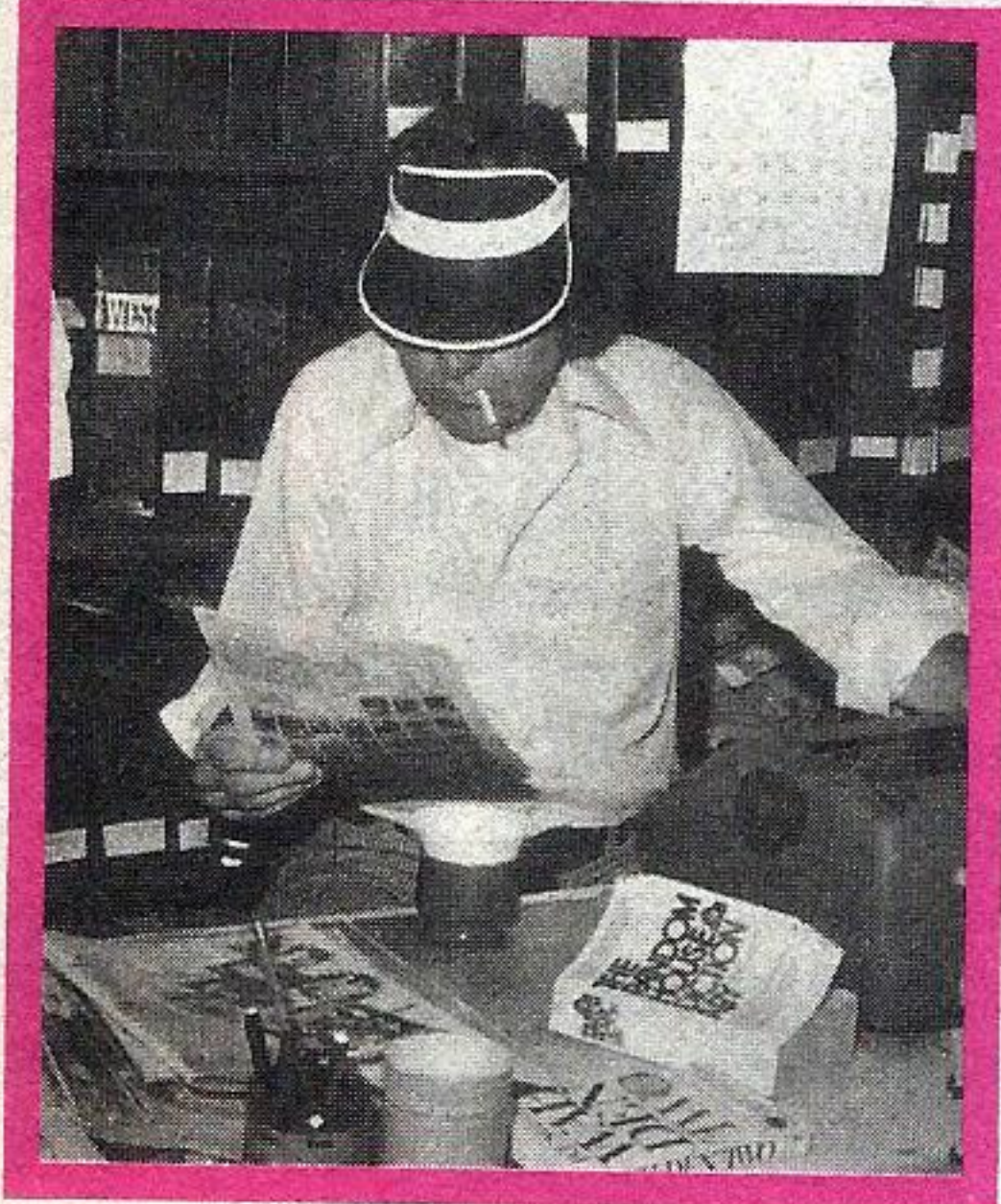
TED DiBIASE

"Super Crazy kind of reminds me of myself in a way. Not that I ever possessed the aerial ability he has, but our approach to the sport is very simple, yet very effective. No mind games in the ring, just solid wrestling, which is something I feel Super Crazy doesn't receive enough credit for. He has more flash than I ever had, and I think his opponents tend to overlook his technical ability. It's an advantage I wish I had back when I was wrestling."

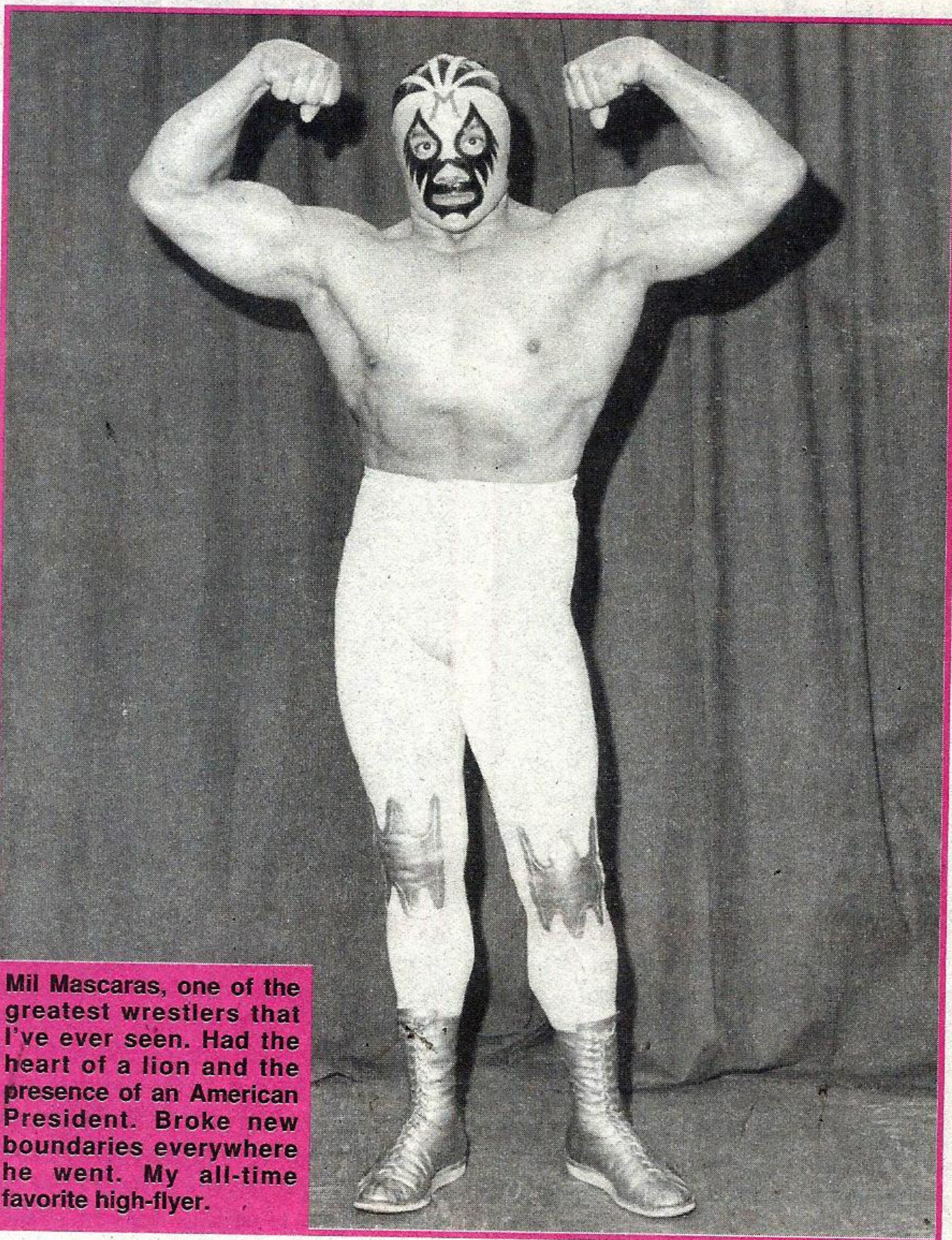
Ted DiBiase, a three-time WWF World tag team champion and one of the sport's most accomplished managers, recently retired from the sport.

MATT BROCK

Remembers



MIL MASCARAS



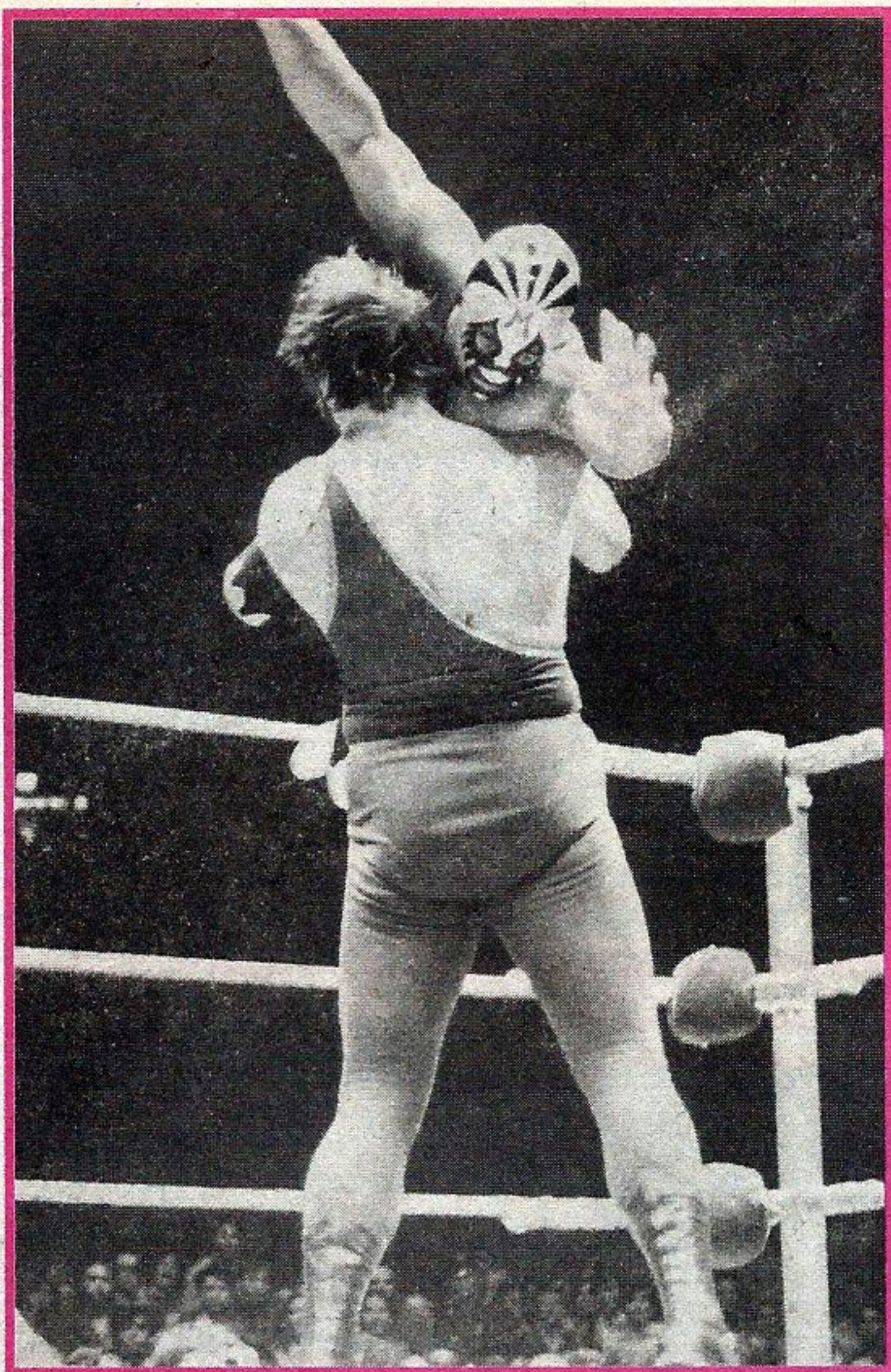
Mil Mascaras, one of the greatest wrestlers that I've ever seen. Had the heart of a lion and the presence of an American President. Broke new boundaries everywhere he went. My all-time favorite high-flyer.

IF THERE'S A formula by which you can figure out the things that stand out in a man's mind over the years, I don't know it and haven't come close to figuring it out. Sometimes it's the most significant things, sometimes it's the thing that seemed significant at the time, but then remains silently forgotten until you start paging through your memory.

About two weeks ago, Dave Lenker suggested the idea of a "Matt Brock Remembers" column, which was music to this reporter's ears. Usually when I get a call from Lenker or Saks, they want me to fly to Japan or Mexico or some other godforsaken place that no real American man over the age of 50 should ever have to go to again. Took him up on the idea immediately. Then went for a walk. Down Seventh Avenue in New York City. Past the crime that they used to call Times Square, but now looks like some big shot promoter's idea of Disneyland. Heck, I'll take one Fiorello LaGuardia for every five Rudy Guilianis, and if you're from

somewhere else and don't know what I'm talking about, they're mayors of New York City, one

from a long time ago, when New York City was different from all other towns, and one from right



December 18, 1972. The night Mascaras made his debut in the Garden—the first night a masked wrestler had ever wrestled in the Garden. Wish that The Spoiler wrestled with his mask on that night, too. Would have made it perfect.

ever competed at Madison Square Garden, and it was because of an obscure rule of the New York State Athletic Commission that denied wrestlers from competing with their masks on. At one time, The Spoiler had been denied the right to compete with his mask, but, ironically, he was the opponent—without a mask—when Mil Mascaras stepped into the ring at the Garden on that night and became the first masked wrestler to wrestle there.

Mil Mascaras. The name means “Man Of A Thousand Masks,” and he was not only a big wrestling star in Mexico, but also a big movie star. Didn’t catch on quite as strong in this country, although this reporter can’t remember a single time ever seeing him lose, and not a single time when he didn’t face the press with poise and dignity and answer every single reporter’s question.

Mascaras had color and pizzazz at a time when the sport’s big stars relied on brawn and wrestling ability. Mascaras had plenty of that, too, but he realized way before his time that wrestling was a form of entertainment, and that those colorful masks he wore

not only added color to the sport, but added an air of mystery, too. A lot of people wanted to know what Mascaras looked like under those masks of his, but nobody—other than close family and friends—ever found out.

“Matt,” he said to me that night at the Garden, “this is a big thing for masked wrestlers everywhere. The Garden is the most important arena in North America, and finally a masked wrestler is allowed to wrestle here. This isn’t just for me; it’s for everyone.”

Then Mascaras stepped into the ring and became the first masked wrestler to compete at the Garden. That night, he also became the first masked wrestler to win a match there, too.

And that’s what I was saying at the start—funny the things you remember 27 years later. About an hour after the card ended, I saw a man walking down the street with about the same height and build as Mascaras, but no mask. I tried to catch up with him, but just when I was about to walk alongside him, a cab almost sideswiped me. Next thing I knew, the man—Mascaras, I thought—was gone. □

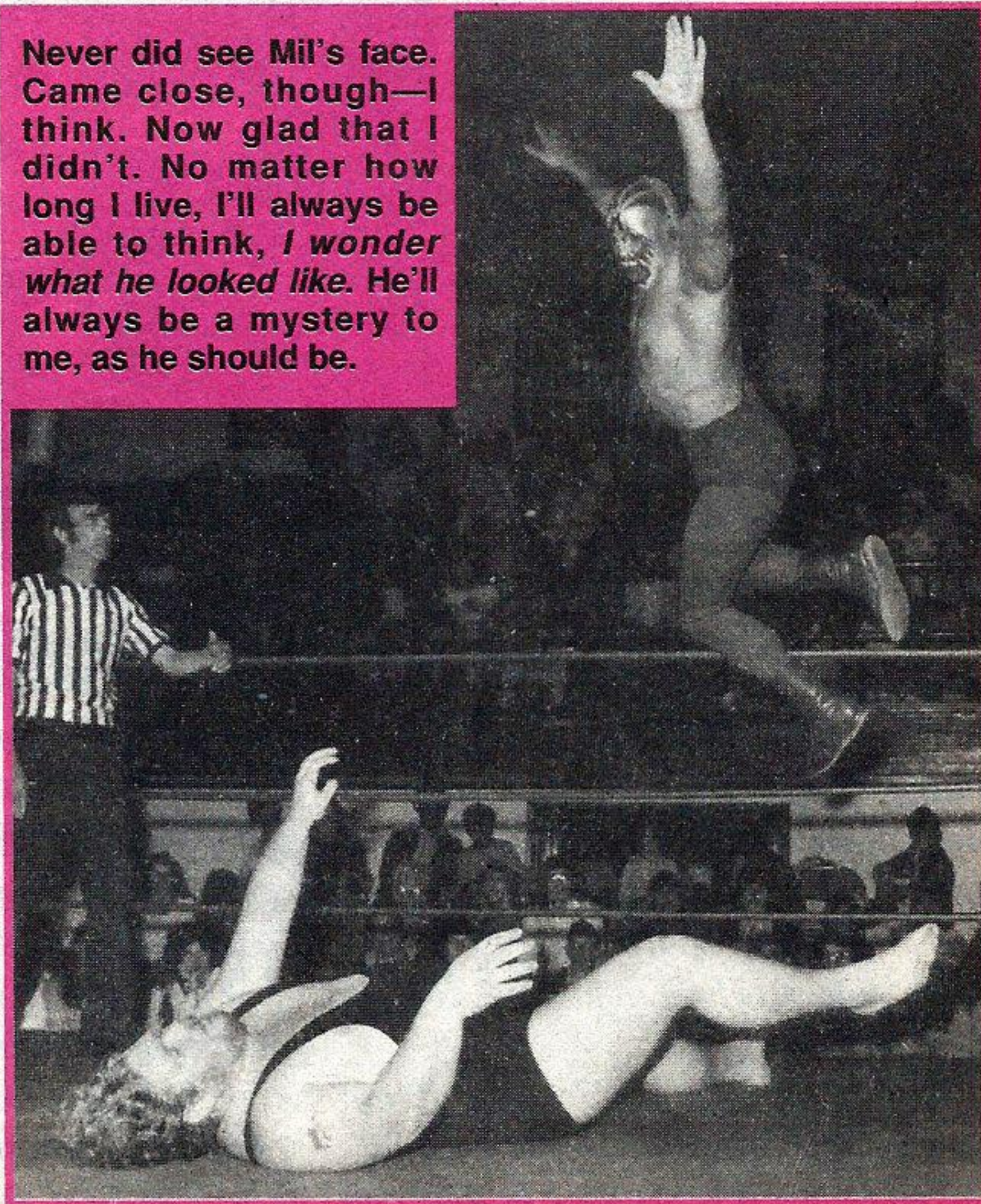
now, when a mayor’s idea of fixing up a city means giving it a sponge bath.

Anyway, I’m walking. Past the storefronts that used to be peep shows or greasy spoons, and right toward a big, round, orange building called Madison Square Garden, which, if you ask me, is still the showpiece of wrestling. You ask just about any wrestler when he knows he’s made it big, and he’ll tell you it’s the day he gets to wrestle at the Garden.

Well, this column is about a man who was one of the greatest wrestlers of his generation, but who almost never got a chance to wrestle at Madison Square Garden. I’m talking about the man who is, to this day, the greatest wrestler ever to not win the WWF, WCW, or even AWA world heavyweight championship, and if you want to know the reason, you’re going to have to go somewhere else, because I’m just not that good. Can’t tell you. I just know.

This, however, might give you an idea: Up until December 18, 1972, not a single masked wrestler had

Never did see Mil’s face. Came close, though—I think. Now glad that I didn’t. No matter how long I live, I’ll always be able to think, *I wonder what he looked like.* He’ll always be a mystery to me, as he should be.



Spot Light ON...

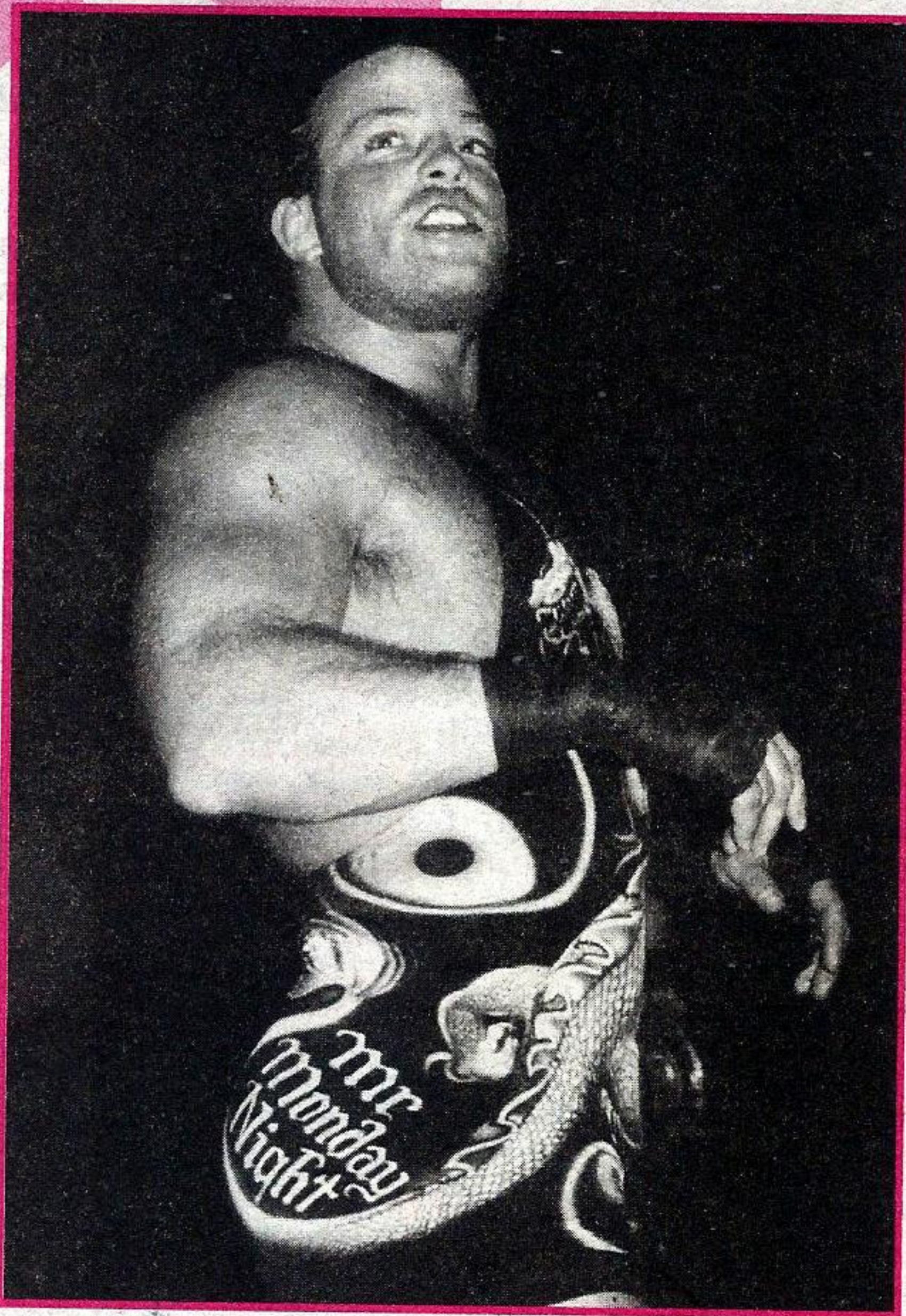
ROB VAN DAM

AS THIS FEATURE goes to print, Rob Van Dam is the longest-reigning champion of any major wrestling federation. He's held the ECW TV title for more than 21 months! Impressive, but many ECW fans feel RVD should be ECW's World champion by now.

A native of Battle Creek, Michigan, Van Dam competed in kickboxing and toughman competitions throughout his home state prior to making his 1990 wrestling debut. Eager to make an impact, Van Dam spent much of his early career on the road, making stops in promotions such as the USWA and All-Japan Pro Wrestling.

Van Dam made his ECW debut on January 5, 1996, and feuded with Sabu, nephew of The Sheik. Their matches were brutal, but they showcased the athletic ability of both men and helped Van Dam climb in the ECW ratings. These matches also forged respect between Sabu and Van Dam, who had clashed earlier on the independent circuit, and soon they challenged ECW tag team champs The Eliminators for the title.

On May 12, 1997, Van Dam shocked the wrestling world by showing up on the WWF's *Raw Is War* and



joining Jerry Lawler in an anti-ECW tirade. RVD later helped Lawler, Sabu, and Bill Alfonso in a shocking attack on Tommy Dreamer and other ECW stars at the ECW Arena.

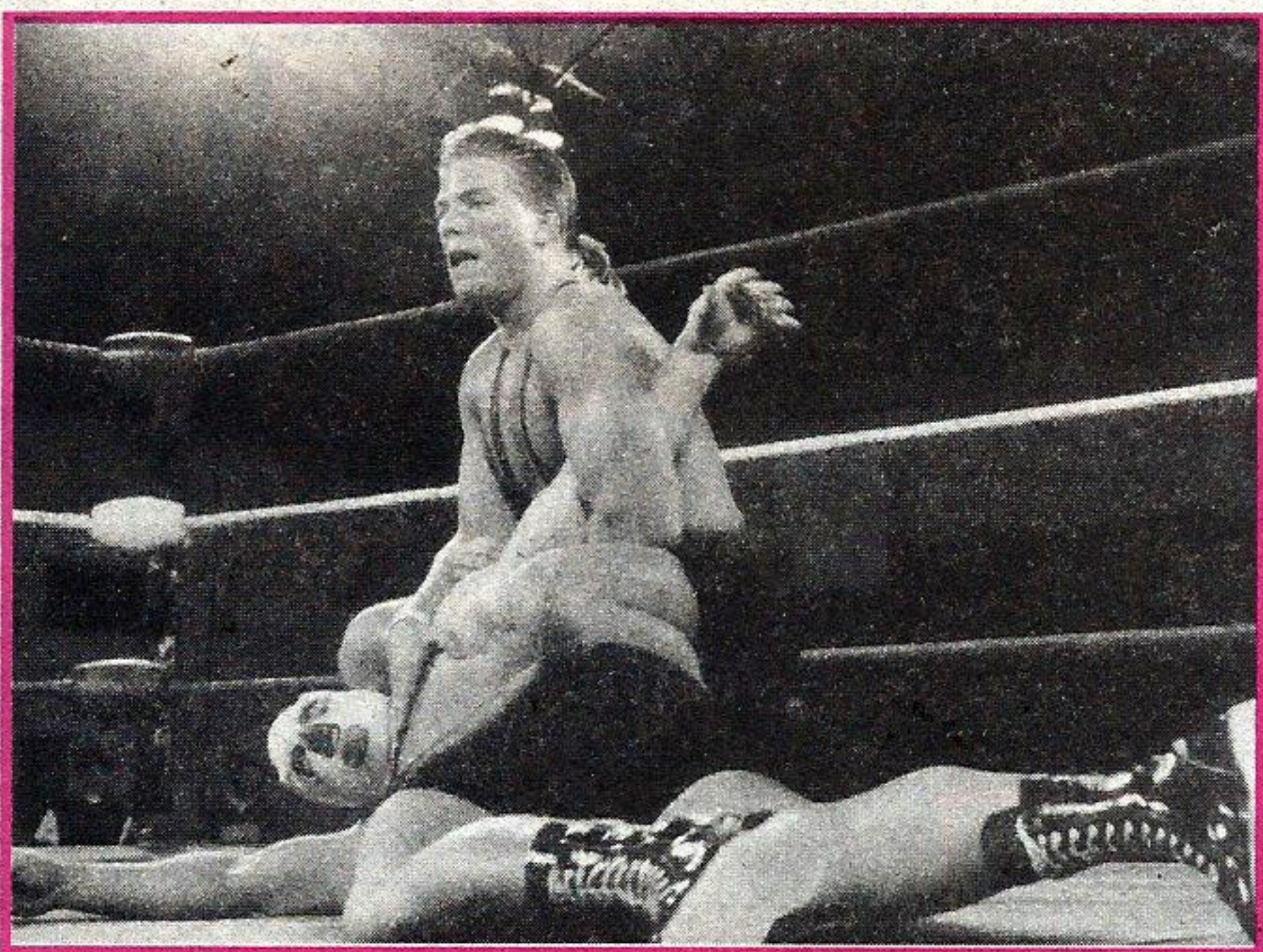
After serving a brief suspension for wrestling in the WWF without permission, Van Dam returned to ECW and established himself as one the federation's hottest stars by upsetting TV

champion Bam Bam Bigelow on April 4, 1998, in Buffalo. Under the watch of manager Alfonso, Van Dam and Sabu captured the tag team title from Chris Candido and Lance Storm on June 27, 1998, then again from The Dudley Boyz on December 13, 1998.

With two belts around his waist, Van Dam's ego ballooned, and his ever-fragile partnership with Sabu imploded when they lost the title a second time. Sabu immediately became a contender to RVD's TV belt and fought the champ to several time-limit draws. RVD also needed his entire arsenal of formidable moves, such as the split-legged moonsault, five-star frog splash, and Van Daminator, to hold off Jerry Lynn in a feud that produced several Match of the Year caliber bouts and helped place

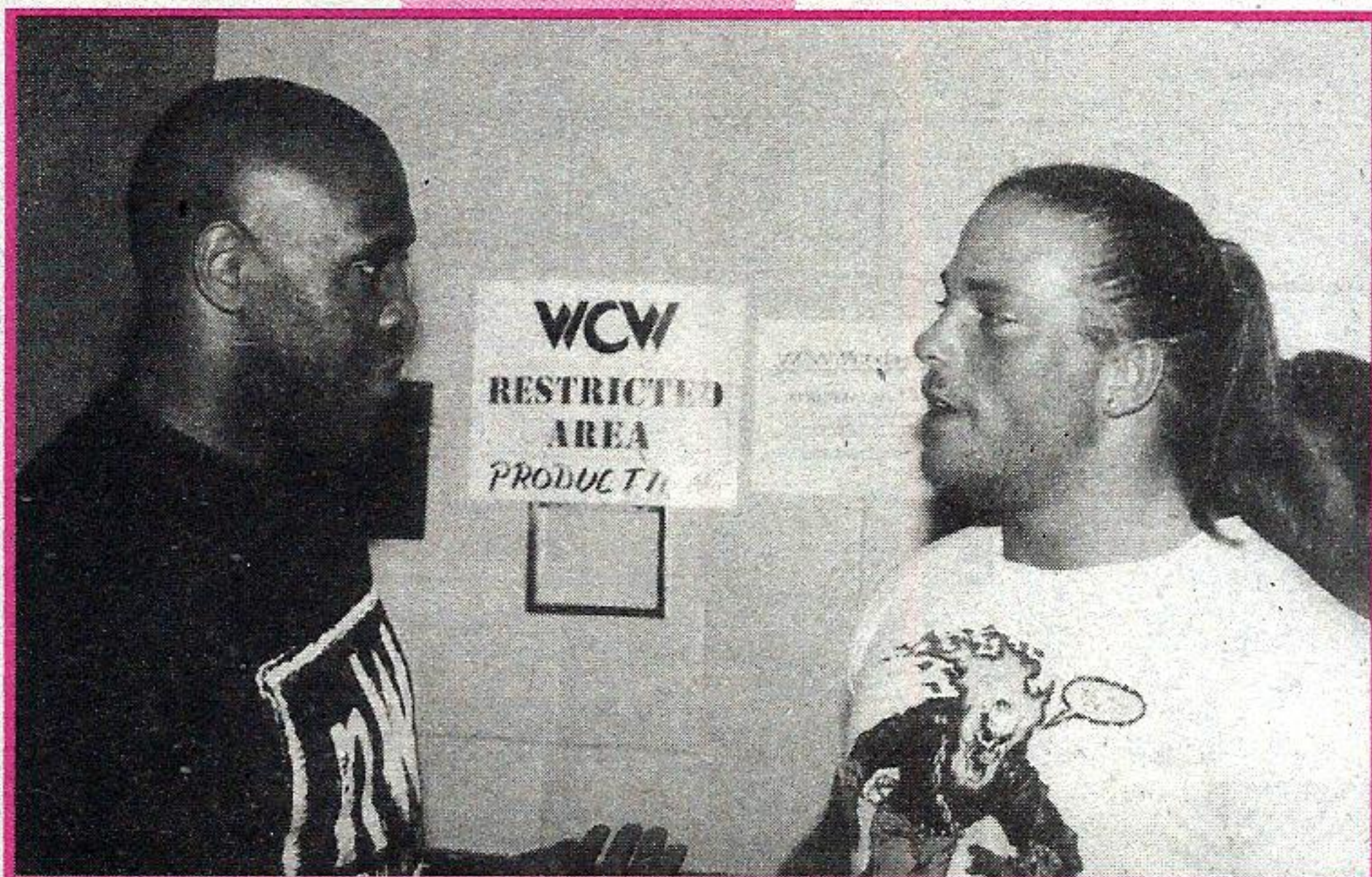
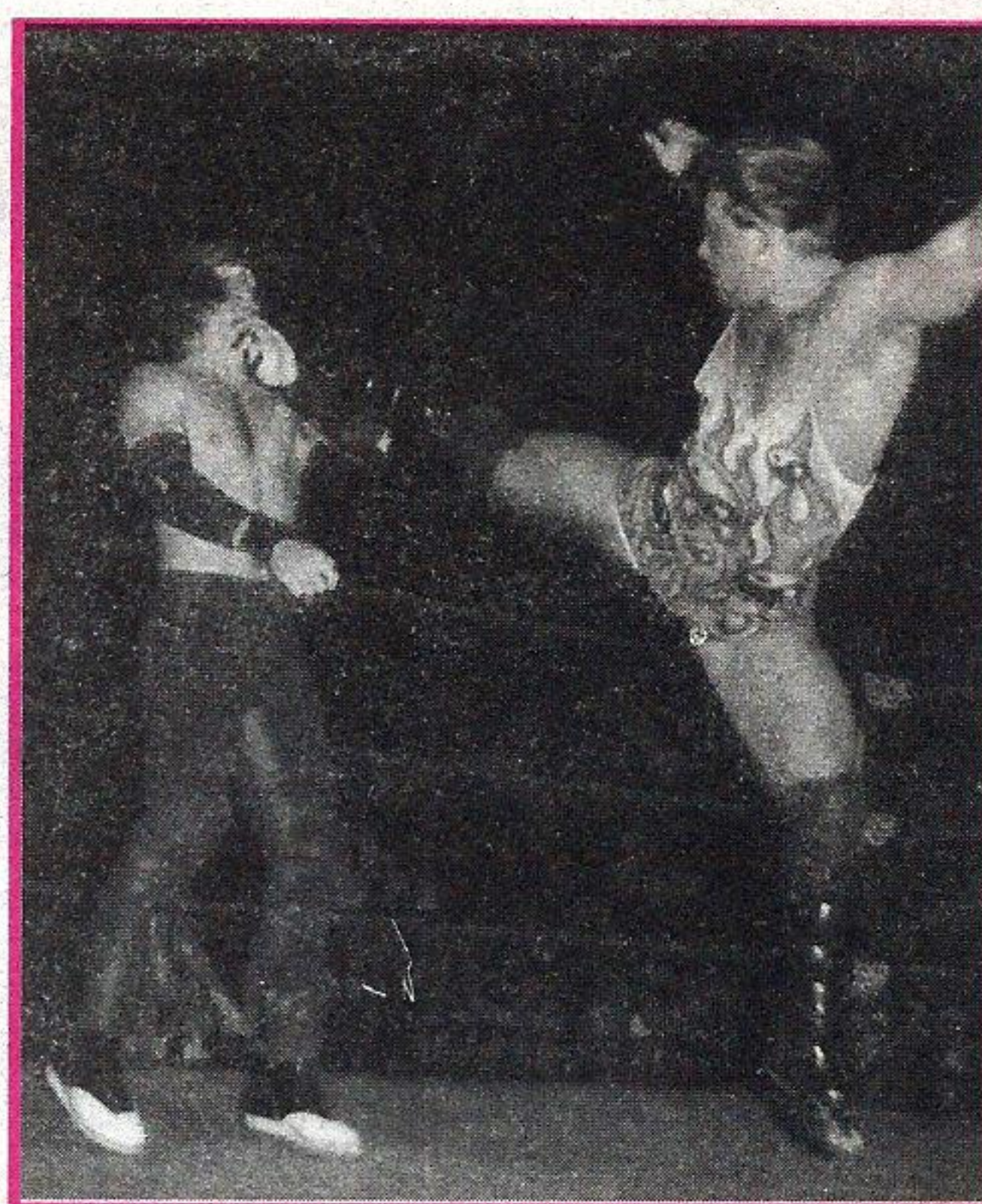
Van Dam second in 1999's "PWI 500."

While Van Dam has yet to make his bid for the World heavyweight title, most people agree that it's just a matter of time before he ascends to ECW's top spot. In fact, some would say he's already there. That's why he's the subject of this month's "Spotlight."

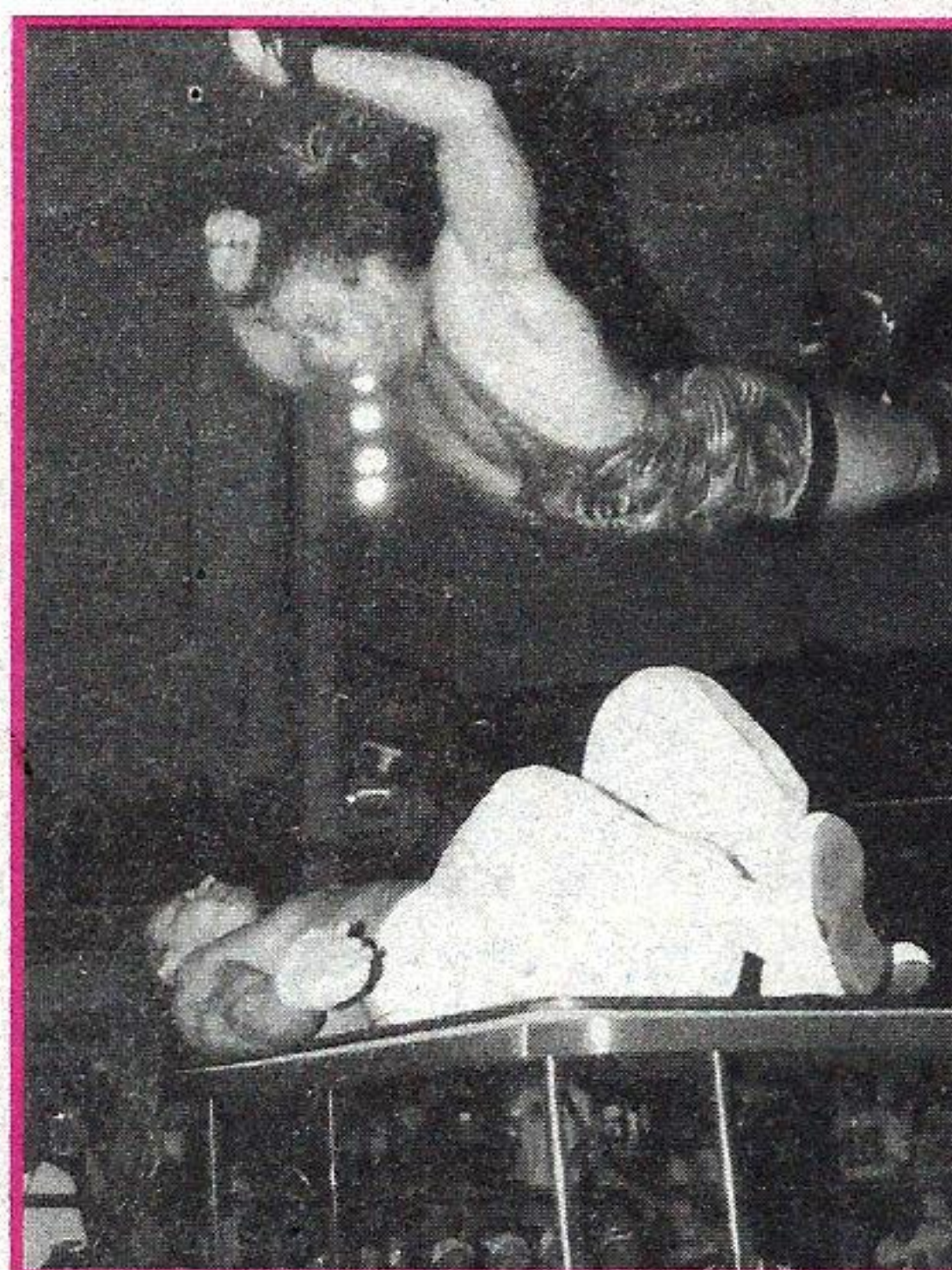


March 1992: Rob Van Dam cinches an armbar on the Super Destroyer at an independent card. Van Dam, a globetrotter in his early days, wrestled in many indy promotions.

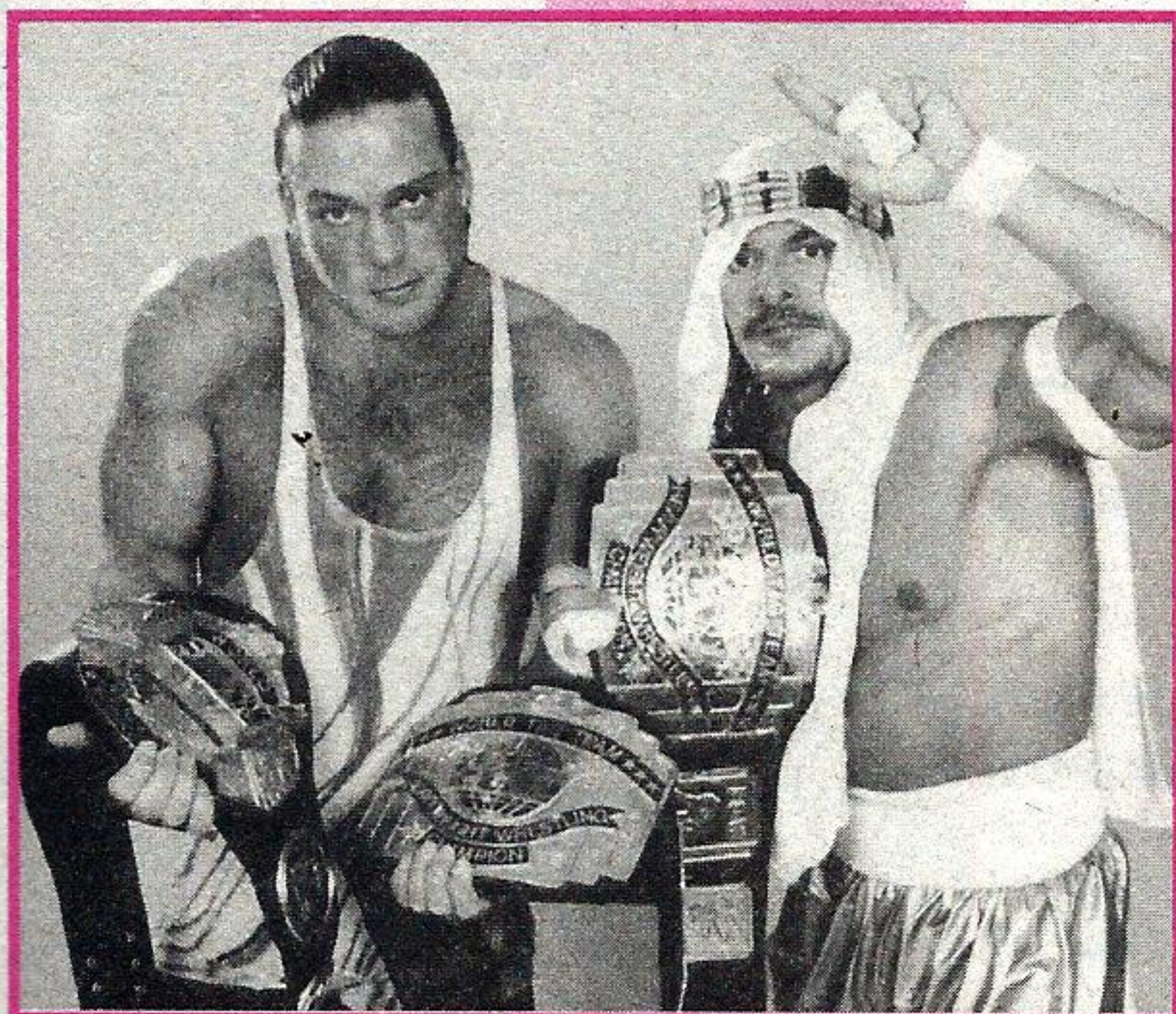
May 1997: Van Dam shocked everyone when he appeared on *Raw Is War* to wrestle Matt Hardy. "Mr. Monday Night" was born as Van Dam entered the anti-ECW phase of his career.



July 1997: Van Dam fueled speculation that he was on his way out of ECW when he turned up backstage at *Monday Nitro*. False alarm—he was only visiting some friends.

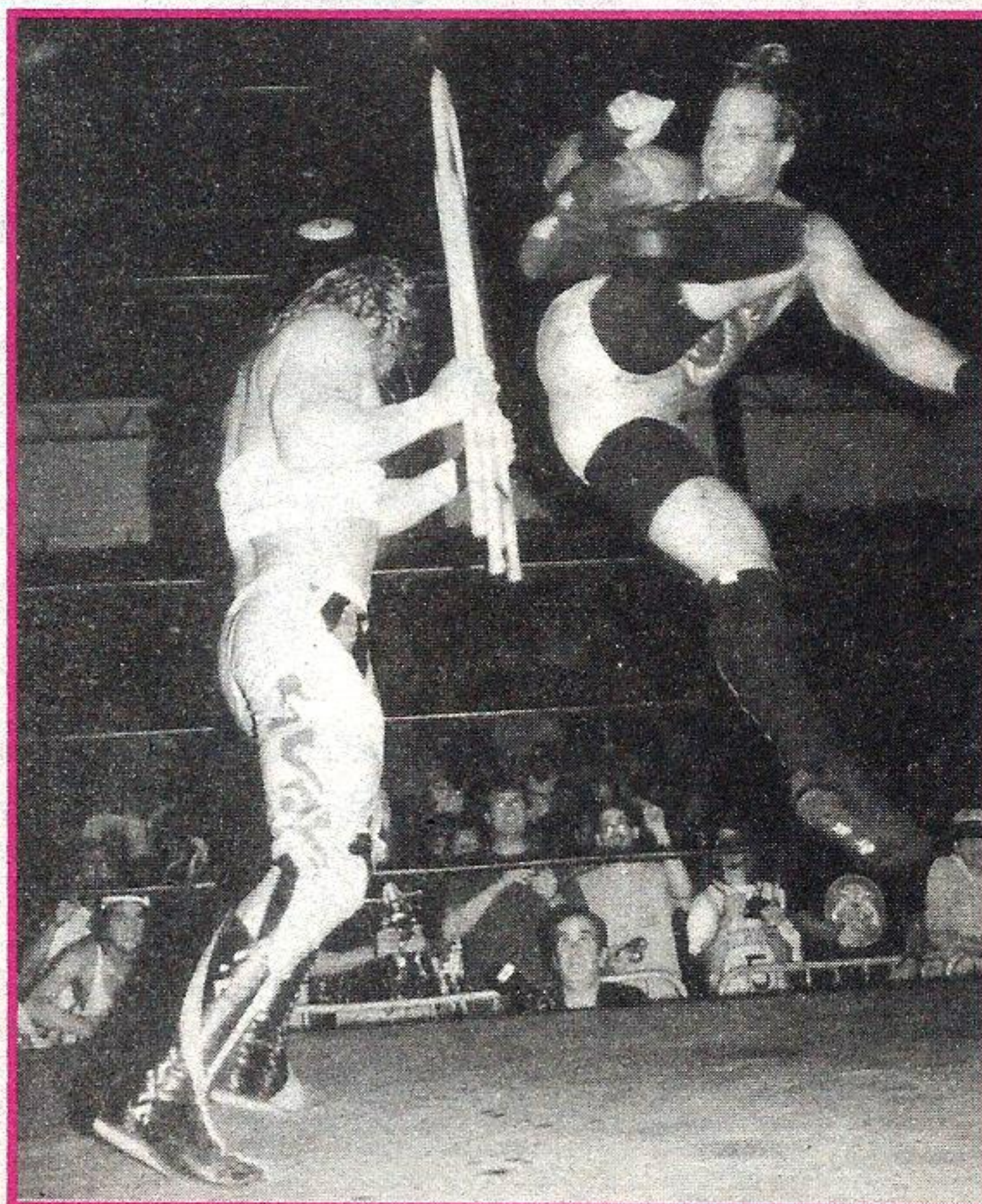


May 1998: Although they were still tag team partners, Sabu demanded a shot at Van Dam's TV title at *Wrestlepalo oza '98*. This 30-minute classic ended in a draw.



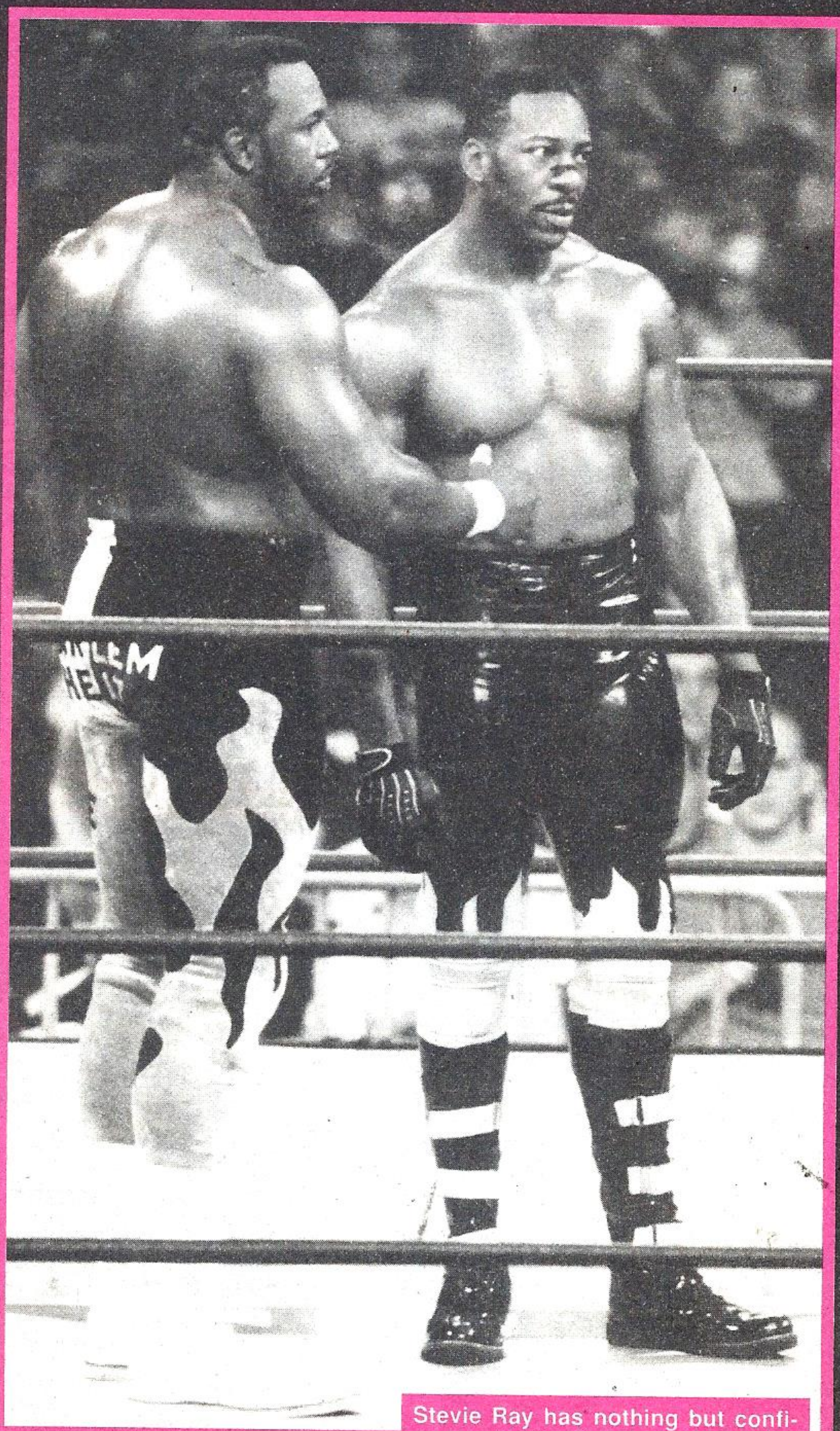
October 1998: Sabu and Van Dam were one of ECW's most explosive tag teams, but ego tore them apart. For all his skill, RVD's high opinion of himself can get in the way.

August 1999: Van Daminator time! RVD was lucky to escape the Jerry Lynn feud with his ECW TV title. Lynn forced Van Dam to overtime in one of their bouts and was nearly awarded the title.



MIDNIGHT

Can A Woman Come Between



Stevie Ray has nothing but confidence in Booker T (above) and nothing but contempt for Midnight (opposite page), despite her seemingly honorable intentions.

WCW's Powers-That-Be did their best to break up Harlem Heat. But while Stevie Ray served a suspension, a long, lean figure emerged from the shadows to protect Booker T. In her efforts to help, has Midnight divided Harlem Heat forever?

By Mitch Lucas

SOMETIMES, EVEN THE most honorable intentions can yield bad results.

When Midnight entered WCW in 1999, her only intention was to help the recently re-formed Harlem Heat in their battles against the Powers-That-Be.

At the same time, Stevie Ray was having his own difficulties outside the ring with the promotion's new creative team. Because of Stevie Ray's absence, Midnight became a valuable ally to Booker T, who was suddenly

BLUES

Stevie Ray & Booker T?

without a regular tag team partner or anyone to watch his back.

Now it looks like Midnight's help—her very presence—is unwanted, at least by one-half of Harlem Heat. Stevie Ray made it clear in his interview for this story that Midnight was not and never will be a part of Harlem Heat as far as he's concerned.

"Booker can do what he wants," Stevie Ray said. "But I won't be teamin' with her. What has she ever done for me? All she's doin' is gettin' in the way. We don't need her. We never needed any outsiders. That's why we won 10 tag team championships—because it was just us. I ain't got no time for some Power Plant wannabe."

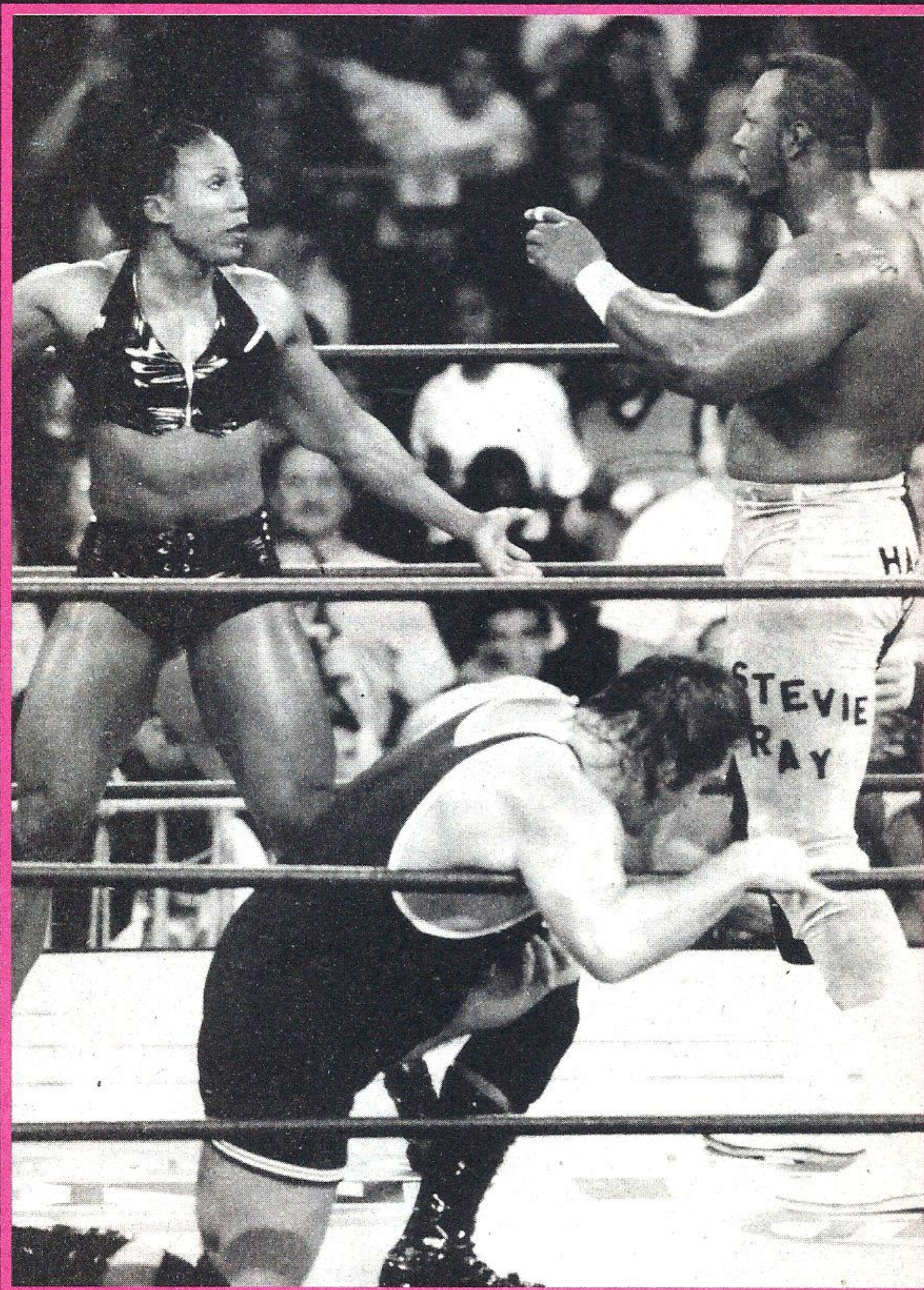
Stevie Ray refused to even be interviewed with Booker T and Midnight for this story, choosing to give his comments over the telephone rather than sit at the same table with his "teammates" at an upscale Atlanta eatery.

Booker T was shocked by Stevie's behavior.

"He wouldn't even show?" the former TV champion said as he sat down at the table and picked up a menu. "I can't believe that."

Midnight, however, wasn't surprised at all.

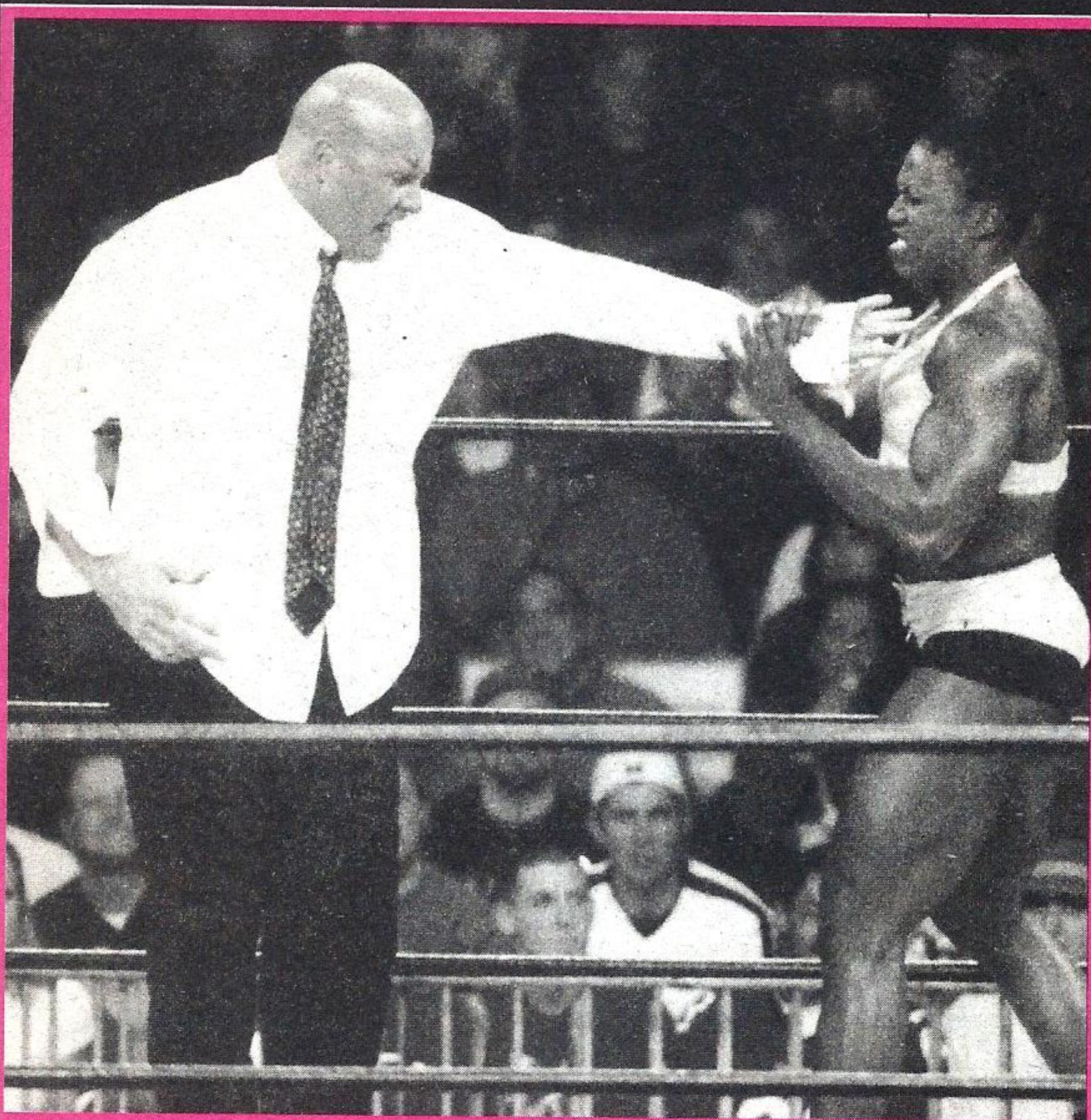
"Stevie Ray hasn't appreciated anything I've done," she said. "I don't understand what his problem is. I've always had a lot of respect for Harlem Heat, and I've known Booker for a long, long time. Man, Harlem Heat is one of the greatest tag teams ever. I wouldn't do anything to hurt either



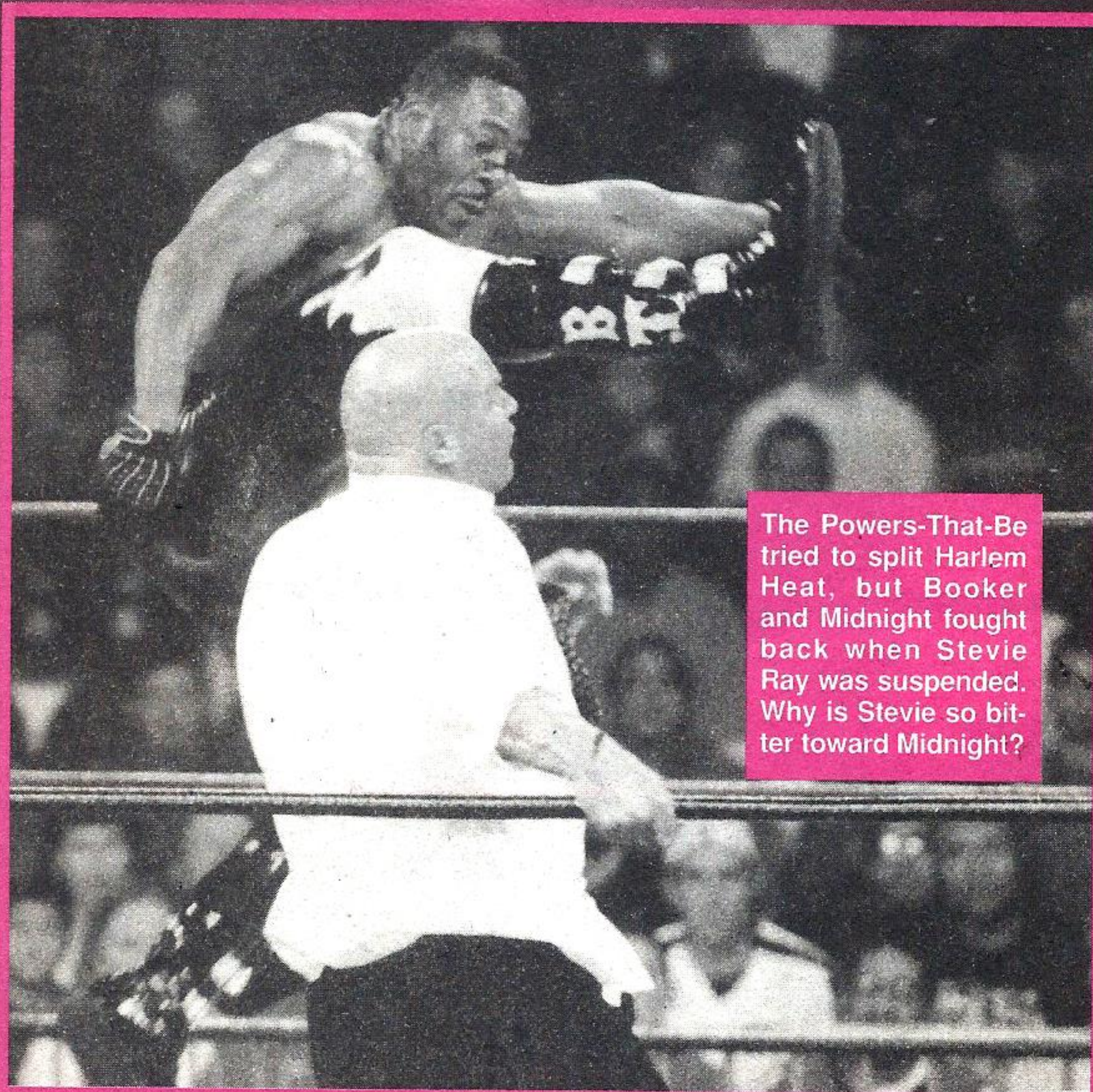
one of these guys. You gotta believe me when I say that. Why he doesn't want me around is beyond me."

When questioned directly about Midnight, Stevie Ray seemed to dance around the subject.

"All I know is that Booker hasn't been the same since she came along," he said. "He's always concerned about her getting hurt. He needs to get his mind right, and we need to be worrying about winning back our



An angular physique gives Midnight a boost when facing larger male foes such as Ron and Don Harris (formerly Creative Control). Harlem Heat could use Midnight's physical tools.



The Powers-That-Be tried to split Harlem Heat, but Booker and Midnight fought back when Stevie Ray was suspended. Why is Stevie so bitter toward Midnight?

title, not some damn woman."

It's not necessary to ask Booker T about how important it is to him that he regain that World tag team title.

His actions tell you everything you need to know about that. He won six WCW TV titles without the help of his brother. He was ranked seventh in the 1998 "PW/500." He appeared to be on the verge of superstardom ... on his own. Yet when his brother finally turned his back on the NWO and suggested they put Harlem Heat back together again, Booker jumped at the opportunity. The chance to again shine with his brother took priority over his promising singles career.

Now, with a new NWO wreaking havoc, Booker knows how critical it is to have as many allies as possible. Hence his association with Midnight.

Midnight, though, still blames herself to an extent for the problems between the brothers.

"I was just watching Booker's back while Stevie was out is all. Maybe I should have left well enough alone ..."

Booker T interrupted her.

"You didn't do nothin' wrong," he said. "He's always been this way. The truth is, he's the hardest-headed man I've ever known, and I've been with him for a lifetime. He ain't never gonna change. Here's the deal, though. If he wants to team with me and keep things goin', he better get his act together and get his own mind right. Otherwise, it might be time for Booker T to head back to the singles show full-time."

He might want to start making those plans right now. The first feud between the brothers could be explained away easily enough. While he was on the sidelines nursing injuries, Stevie Ray had no choice but to watch his brother excel without him. The more he watched, the more insecure he became. He worried about his spot in WCW. Then the NWO

reached out to him.

But the fact that the brothers are at odds again, less than six months after reuniting, suggests that there are deeper problems between them. Midnight may have just been the catalyst for what was an inevitable split.

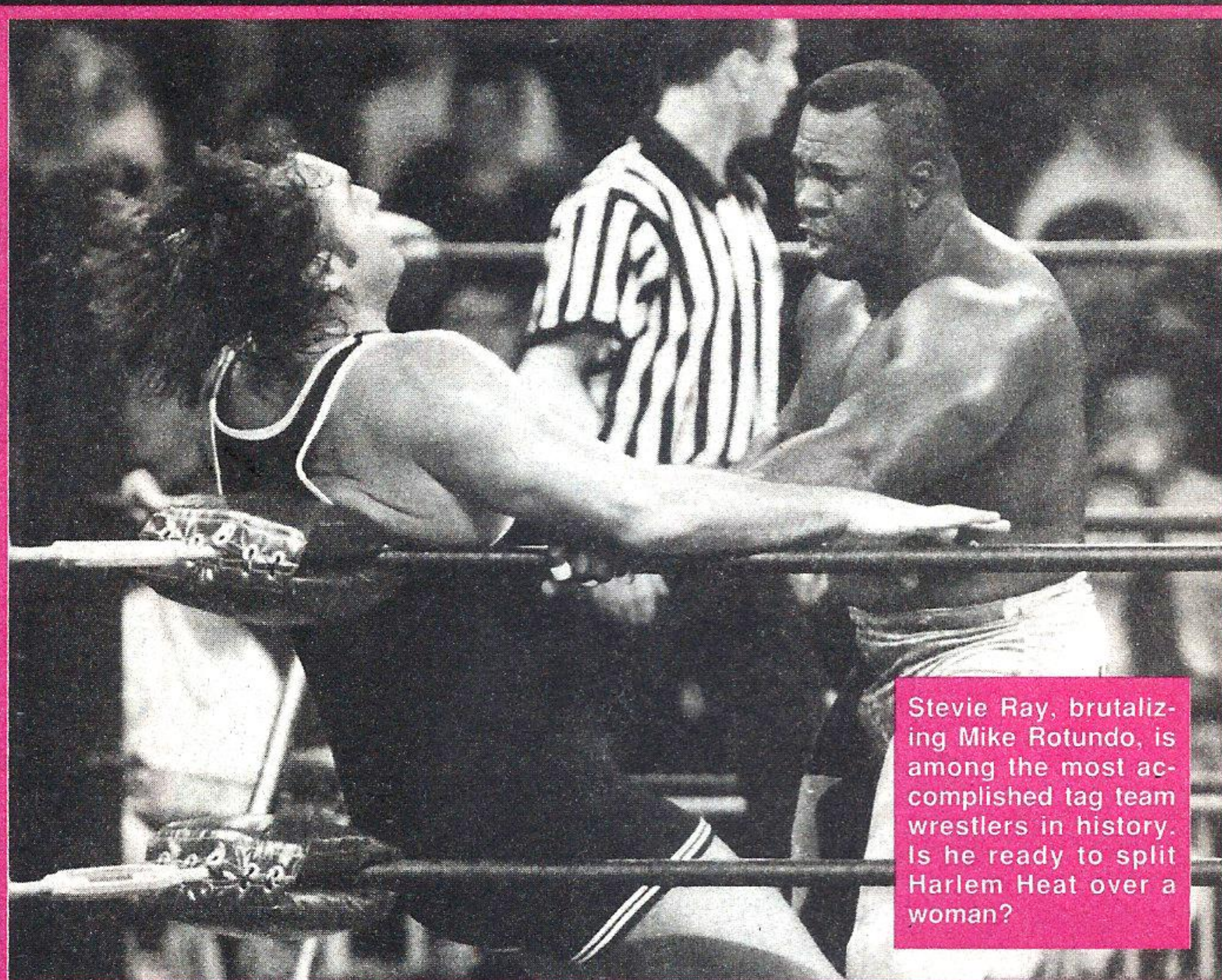
"My brother thinks he's gonna go out and beat Bret Hart or Goldberg or somebody and win the World title?" Stevie said. "That fool's crazy. He couldn't do anything without me before. What makes him think he can now? Let him take what's-her-name with him. Maybe we can hook up in a mixed tag and I'll show her she was wrong to ever come between us."

"If Stevie Ray really wants to get the tag team title back, putting aside his problems with Booker T and Midnight is imperative," said WCW broadcaster Scott Hudson. "It's in everyone's best interests, including those of WCW. We need Harlem Heat. Without them, we could be looking at a replay of 1996. That spells disaster for this company. I agree with you, though. There might be deeper problems than what we know about."

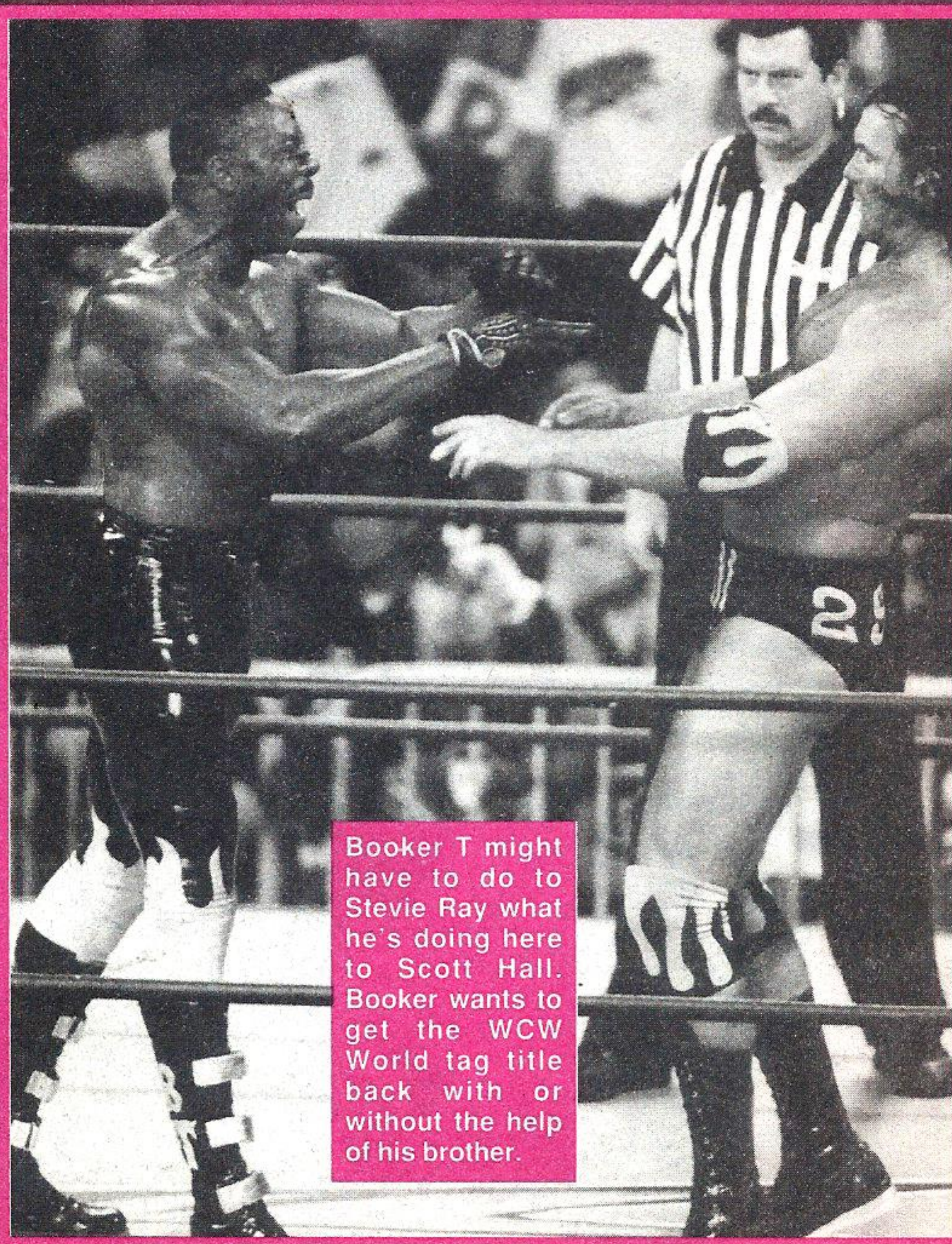
As expected, Booker T welcomed the opportunity to give Harlem Heat another chance.

"It ain't gone," Booker T said. "It ain't too late. But it's getting there. He needs to pick up the phone and call me. He's got my number. But life don't stand still for nobody. A month from now might already be too late."

"I ain't callin' him," said Stevie Ray. "He thinks he can go it alone, huh? Here's to you, brother. I'll see you in the ring." □



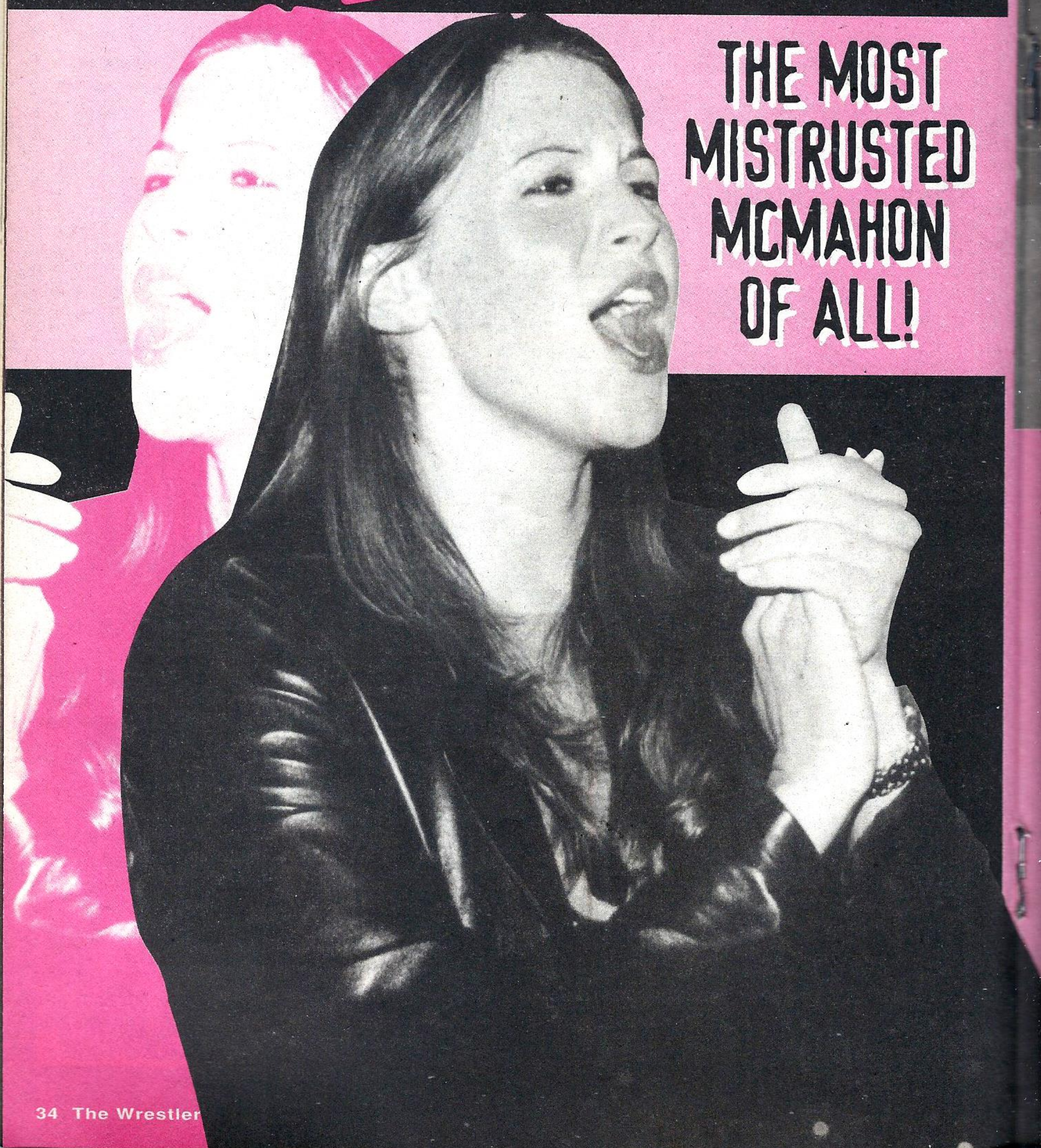
Stevie Ray, brutalizing Mike Rotundo, is among the most accomplished tag team wrestlers in history. Is he ready to split Harlem Heat over a woman?

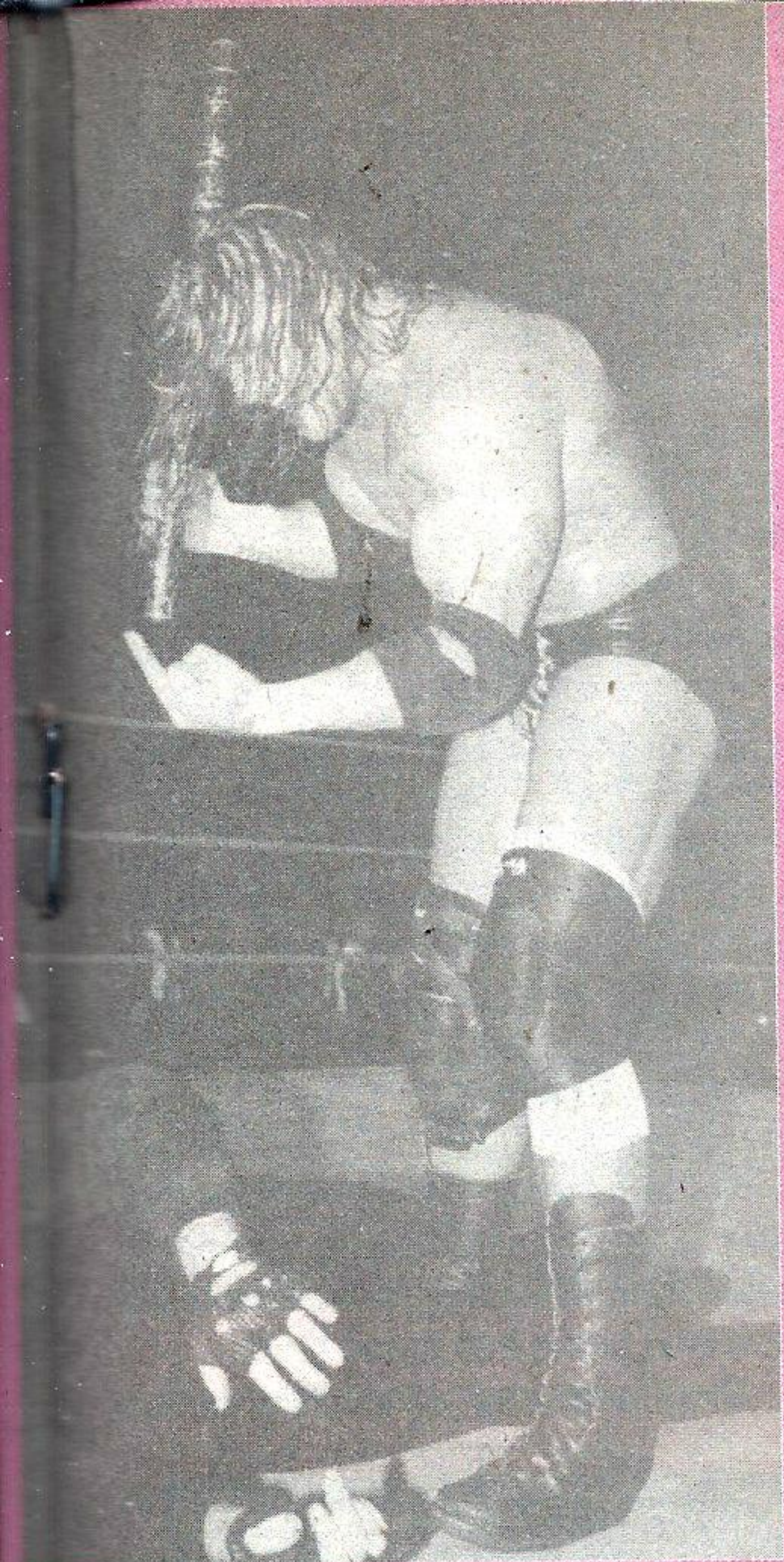


Booker T might have to do to Stevie Ray what he's doing here to Scott Hall. Booker wants to get the WCW World tag title back with or without the help of his brother.

STE **PHONY**

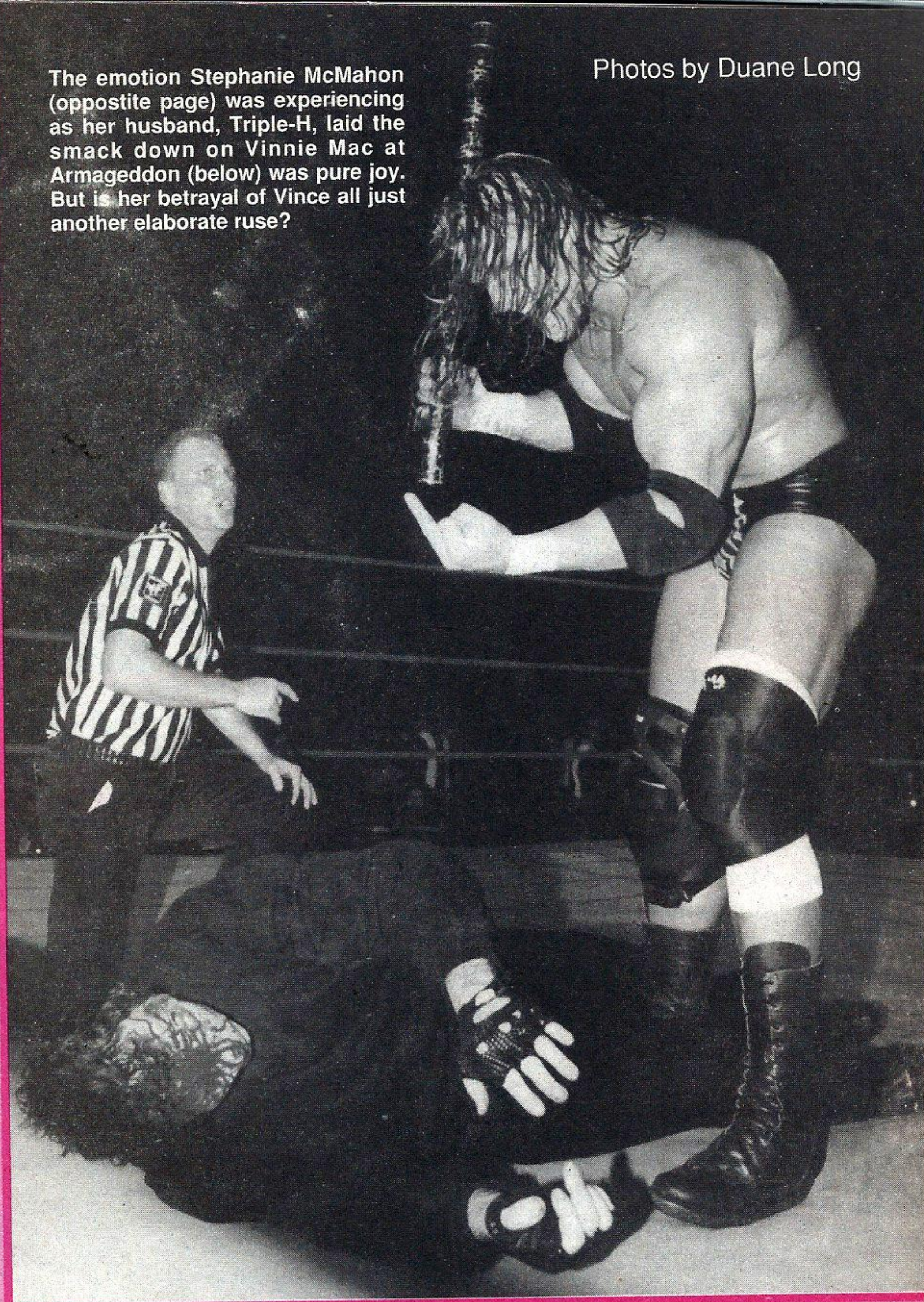
**THE MOST
MISTRUSTED
MCMAHON
OF ALL!**





The emotion Stephanie McMahon (opposite page) was experiencing as her husband, Triple-H, laid the smack down on Vinnie Mac at Armageddon (below) was pure joy. But is her betrayal of Vince all just another elaborate ruse?

Photos by Duane Long



**FIRST
THERE WAS
STEPHANIE
AND TEST.
NOW WE HAVE
STEPHANIE
AND TRIPLE-H.
NOW WE
WONDER THIS:
WHY WOULD
ANYONE BUY
STEPHANIE
MCMAHON'S
GAMES?**

By Bryan Ethier

DID YOU NOTICE the freshly curled ringlets of hair? (How could you not?) The rosy blush of her cheeks? The cherry glow of her pouting lips? Did you catch the scorn in her eyes? The extra sass in her posture? The look of power in a once-disheveled and forlorn face?

Mick Foley did, the night *Raw* closed the 20th century, and he

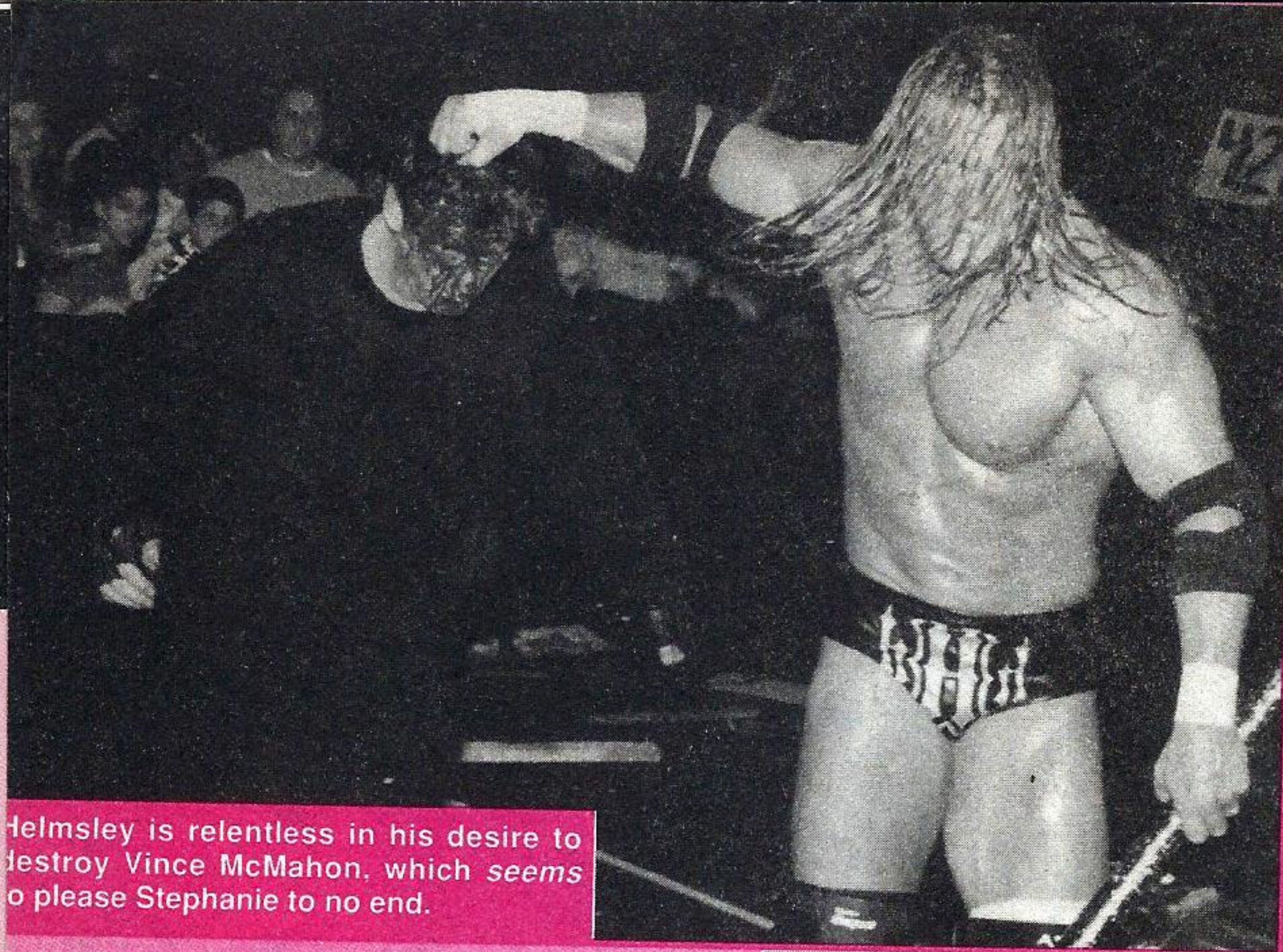
did not like it. No, Mick Foley (along with most rationally thinking fans across the globe) neither welcomed nor appreciated the new Stephanie McMahon.

Ain't she sweet?

No, she ain't.

"Stephanie, I have to tell you something," Foley said on the December 27 broadcast. "The Godfather has a message: You belong backstage with his other hos."

Yes, moms and dads, go find your daughters. Make sure they are in bed, snuggling up with their



Helsley is relentless in his desire to destroy Vince McMahon, which seems to please Stephanie to no end.

Christmas teddies. No one is safe from the wrath of Triple-H. No pure-as-snow young coed is immune from the touch of impropriety. Steph's become a complete and total ...

"I am saddened and disgusted by the changes in Stephanie McMahon," said Jim Ross. "What she has done to her family is unforgivable and unforgettable." In a nutshell, Mrs. Helmsley has turned from maiden to hussy.

It began with a foiled wedding, continued with a clandestine wedding, and extended to a plan to unseat the man who created today's wildly successful WWF.

By all rights, Vince and Linda McMahon should now be drinking a toast to their daughter, Stephanie McMahon-Martin, and her husband, Andrew. But something went amiss as both bride and bridegroom stood at the altar, about to exchange wedding vows. What went wrong was this: In the midst of Steph's wedding to Test, Triple-H announced to a stunned audience that he and Stephanie had secretly married a night earlier. Now the McMahon matriarch and patriarch are toasting their despair.

"I was torn to shreds when I heard that she had married that scumbucket," said Foley. "At the time, I could only imagine that she

had too much to drink at her wedding shower and Triple-H had taken advantage of her."

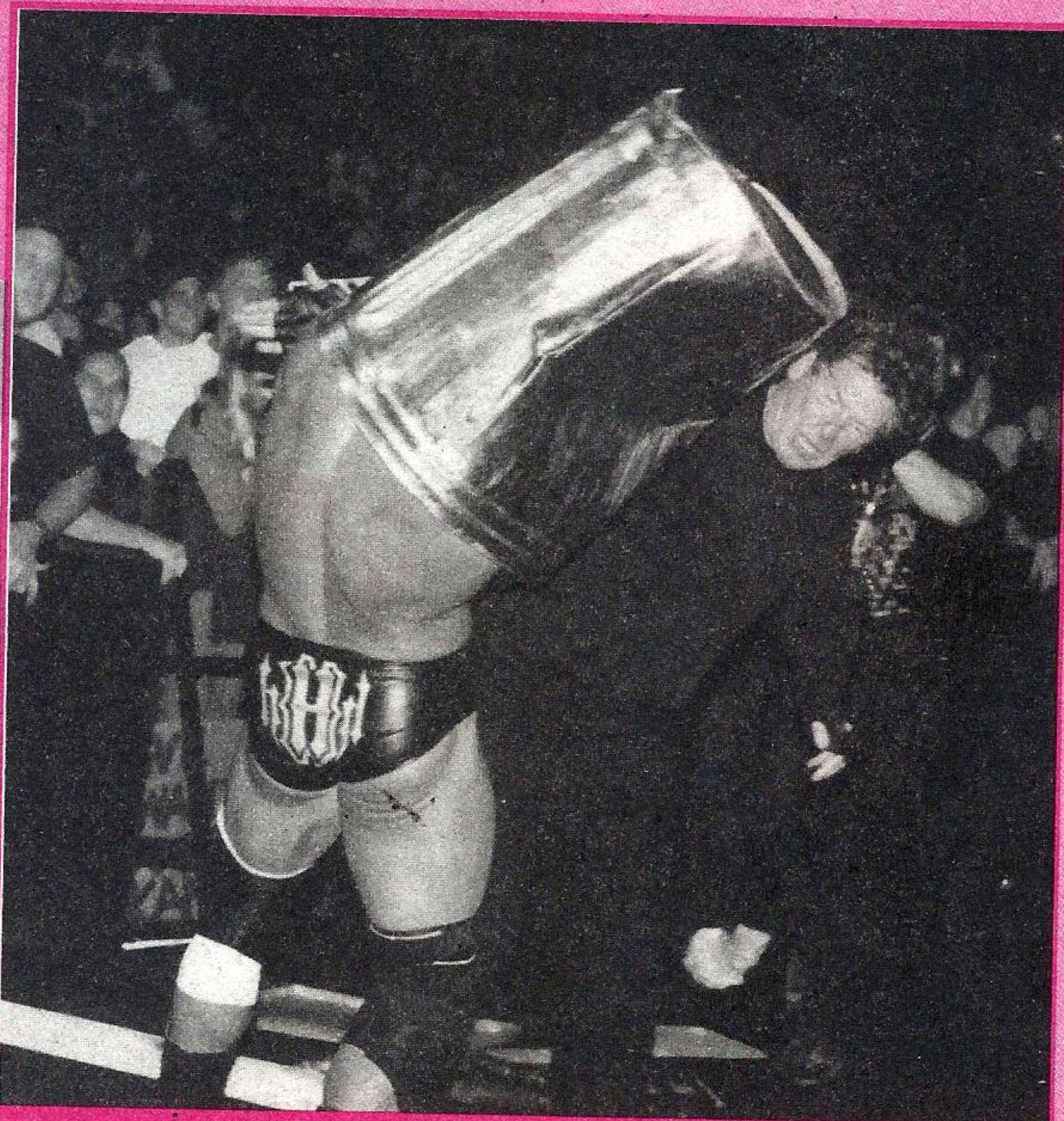
In the wake of the stunning news came more shocking revelations: Steph and HHH had

planned their wedding days in advance. Their marriage was all a part of an elaborate scheme for "The Game" and Miss Steph to take control of the WWF.

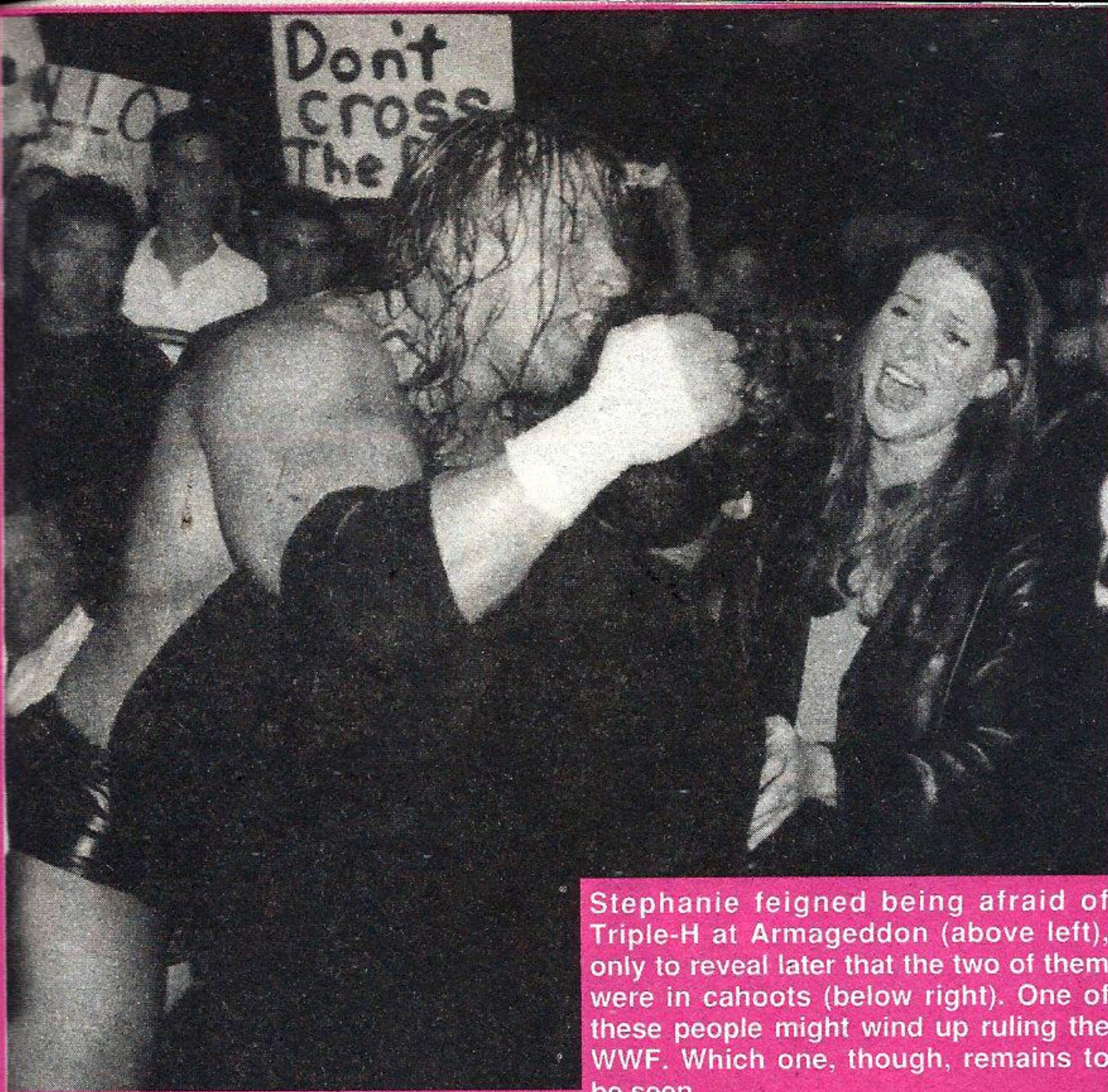
"We will achieve our master plan," said Triple-H. "Taking the WWF title from The Big Show was just the next step."

A world title seems insignificant considering their recent plundering of the federation. At Armageddon, the two teamed to help Triple-H defeat Vince McMahon. Vince was a sledgehammer blow away from defeating Triple-H when Steph interfered and asked if she could deliver the coup de grace. Seconds later, Triple-H snatched the sledgehammer from her hands and disabled his boss with a thunderous blow. Worse yet, after the match, Stephanie first cried at her father's side. Then, shockingly, she and her husband broke into broad grins.

Stephanie had turned her back



Is the McMahon-Helmsley war really an elaborate piece of family cooperation between Stephanie and her father? It's not like Vince hasn't concocted similar schemes before.



Stephanie feigned being afraid of Triple-H at Armageddon (above left), only to reveal later that the two of them were in cahoots (below right). One of these people might wind up ruling the WWF. Which one, though, remains to be seen.

And some scheme: Stephanie falls in love with Test, gets amnesia after being struck on the head by a wastebasket hurled by The British Bulldog, regains her memory and decides she's not ready for marriage. Then, to the world, she proclaims Triple H "a turn-on."

Talk about things that make you go "Hmmmmmm."

"Is it possible that all this is a put-on?" wondered Ross. "I'd be real careful in posing that question. I would really have to think about the nature of her relationship with her family."

Lest one forget, brother

on her father and the WWF.

"What a phony!" cried The Rock. "What is wrong with these two jabronis? Somebody had better take the time to kick their roody-poo candy [butts]."

Problem is, with Steph and HHH ruling the roost, no one's had the opportunity to do so. The king and queen of the WWF have used their power to set wrestler against wrestler in some of the most bizarre matches imaginable.

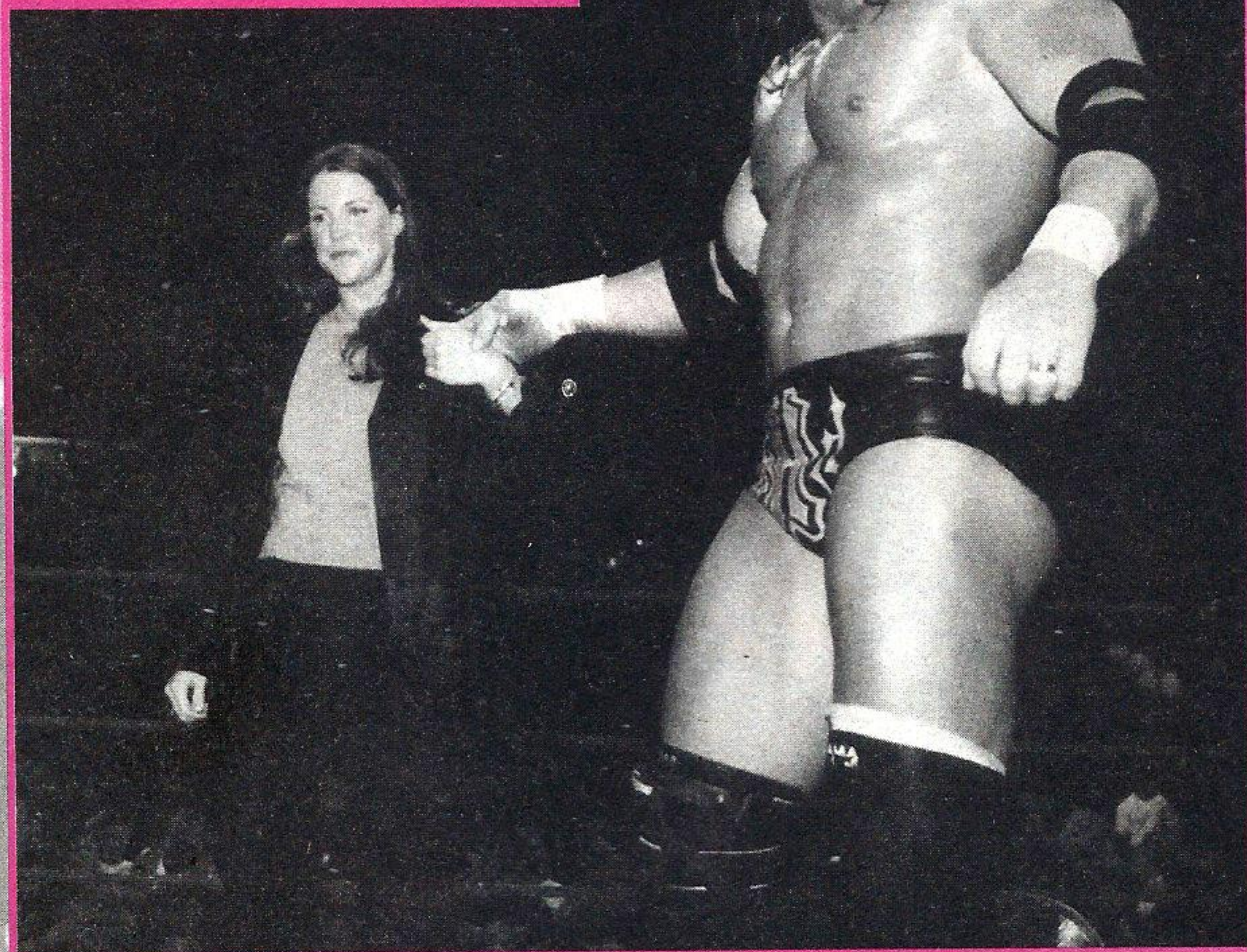
"As a parent, I have to ask myself why she betrayed her dad," mused Foley.

Publicly, Stephanie attributes her treachery to months of hell that culminated in her abduction by The Undertaker. She had been used as her father's pawn on a number of occasions to help him win his battle with "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin.

"Stephanie McMahon takes business very personally," said Jerry "The King" Lawler.

"Her father has hardly acted as a loving dad. Would you lock your daughter in a basement and let her be run over by rats? Not me."

"Stephanie knew what she was getting into when she decided to



throw her hat into the wrestling ring," said one WWF executive who asked to remain anonymous. "She's lived a wrestling life; she's seen it all. She knew what her father and the other wrestlers were capable of doing. She should not have been shocked that she became a pawn in her father's elaborate schemes. Now it appears she is using others as pawns in her own scheme."

Shane and father Vince twice had phony feuds, all for the sake of furthering the McMahon domination of the WWF. Could Stephanie's feud with her father be merely for show? Might we suddenly see the McMahon family rise as one to quash yet another nemesis, this one named Hunter Hearst Helmsley?

Triple-H—beware! □

CONTROL YOUR

Why Ric

With his crazy behavior and penchant for using crowbars, David Flair is destroying what is left of the Flair legacy. Why doesn't Ric Flair intervene? Is Ric ashamed of his son's behavior ... or is he encouraging it?

By Harry Burkett

"I'M LETTING DAVID chart his own course right now," said Ric Flair. The phone line crackled, then went dead for a moment. "You'll have to excuse my cellular. I just drove under

Ric Flair once stood by his son David's side (opposite page), but now Ric has stepped aside ... and David has turned into a raving lunatic who threatens ring announcers (below).

SON!

Is Letting David Run Amuck

power lines. Anyway, I don't want to comment on David's recent actions. He's a grown man capable of making his own decisions."

Oh, really?

Does that apply to the madman who stalked Kimberly Page inside and outside WCW arenas?

Are we talking about the same David Flair who stuffed The Maestro into his own piano?

Is this the same lunatic who stopped for gas, found out the garage attendant's name was Crowbar, and started screaming for joy?

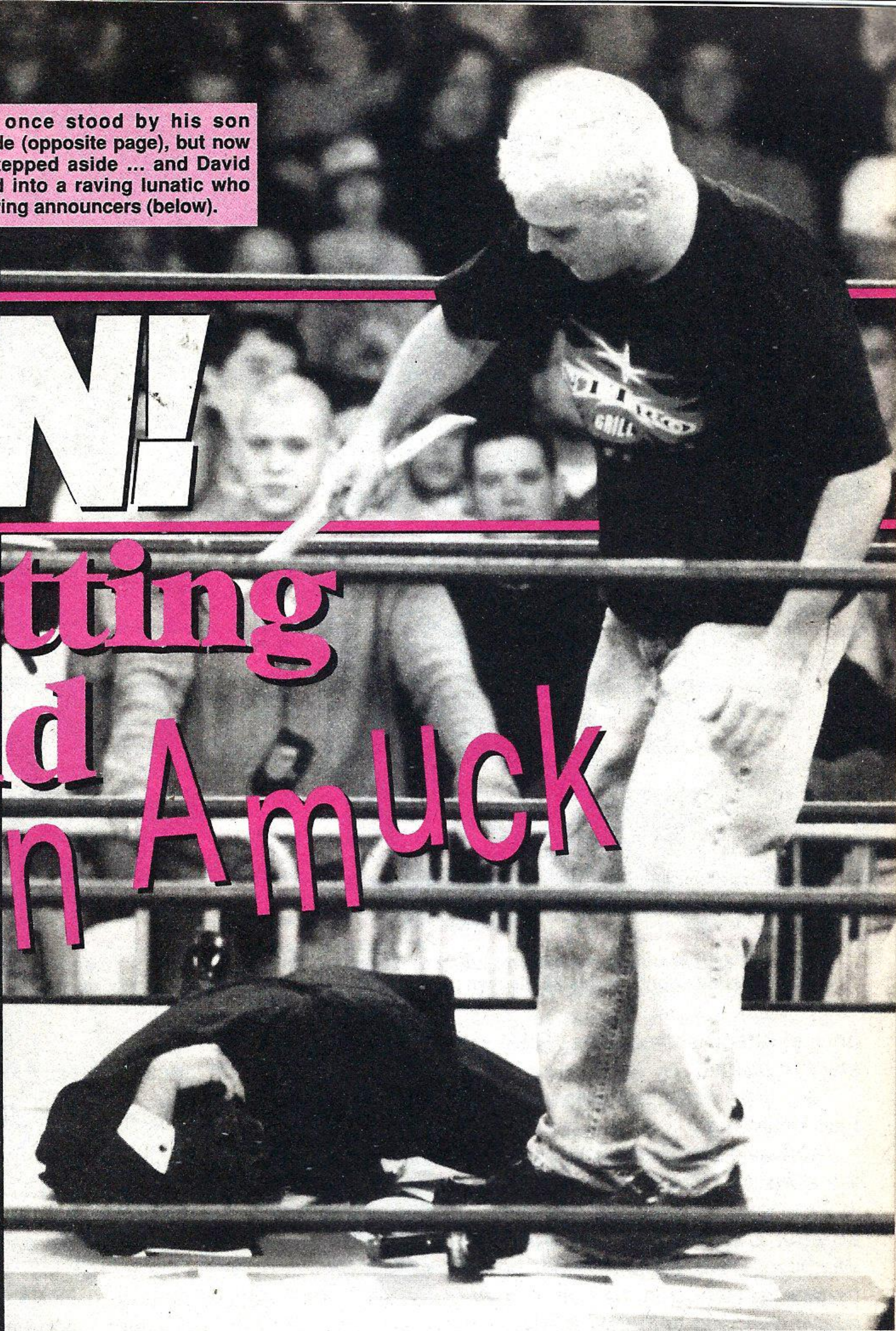
"Listen, I'd like to answer more of your questions, but, my friend, my cellular's really giving me

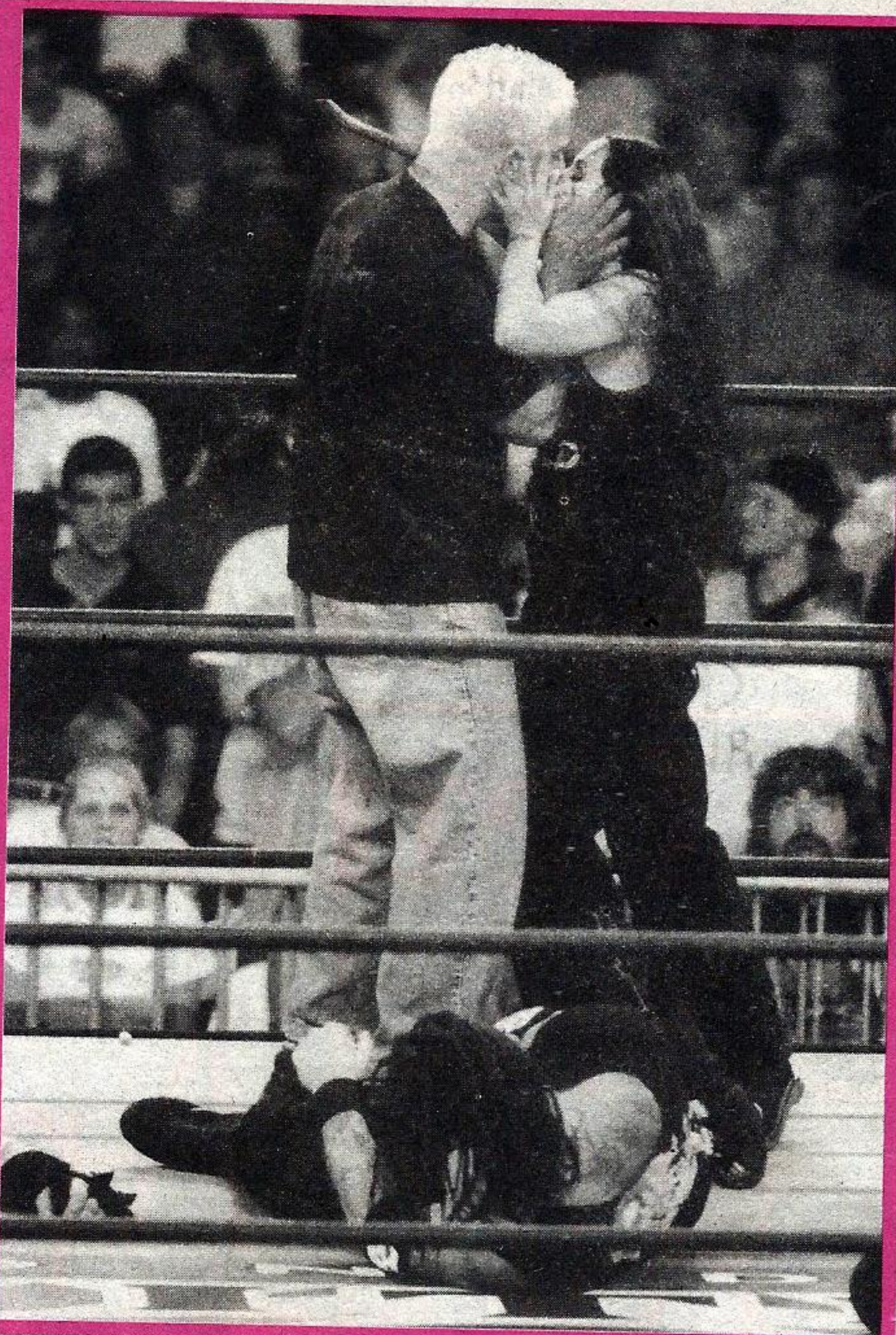
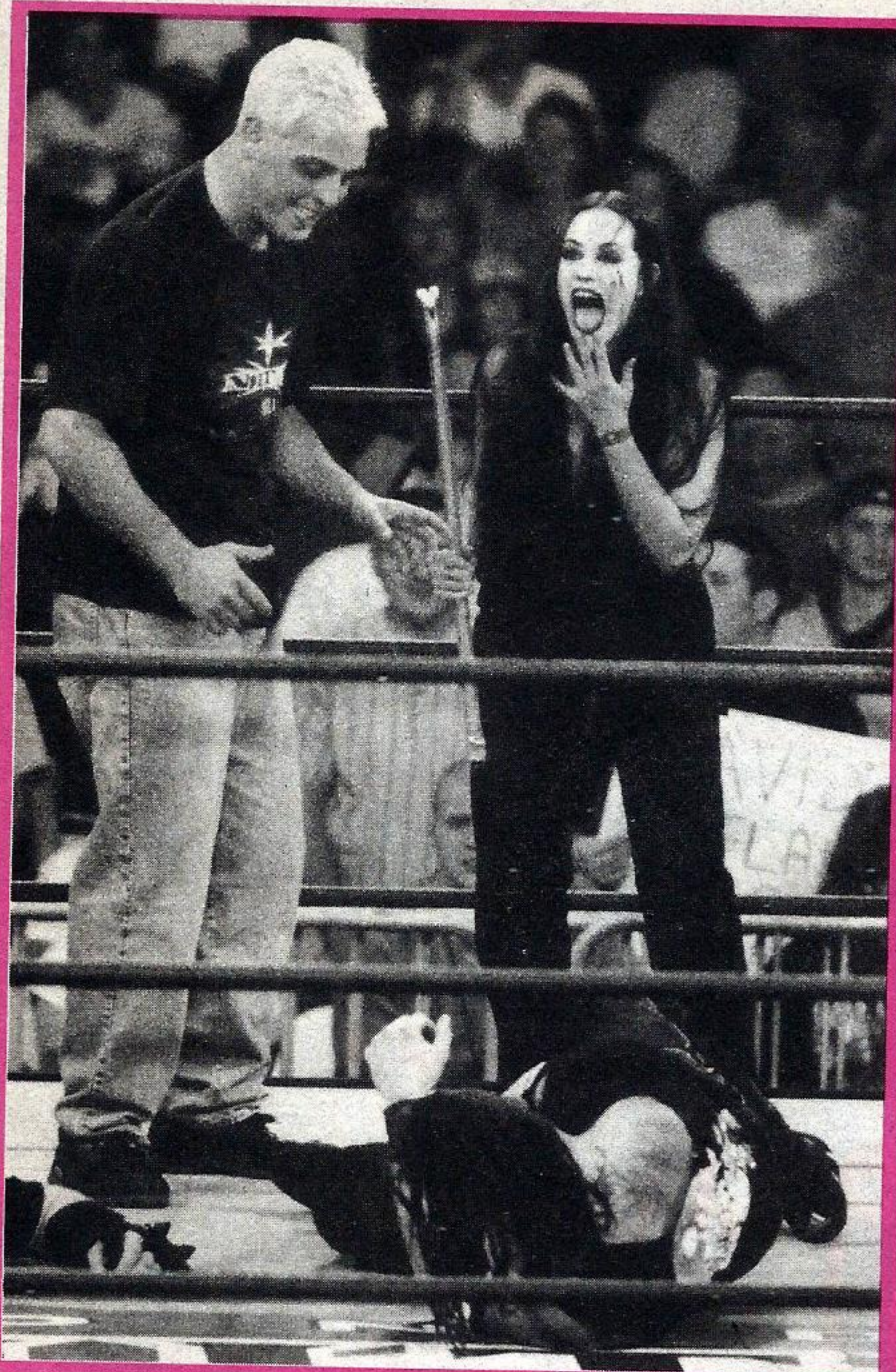
problems," continued Flair via mobile phone. "Gotta go."

How convenient. Then again, why should Ric Flair be expected to have sound judgment? Wasn't the grand ol' man committed to the Central Florida Mental Hospital last year?

Well, that depends on whom you ask. During an interview last fall, Flair implied that his alleged insanity was a publicity stunt.

Whether that's true or not, there are plenty of other times that the elder Flair's mental stability was questioned. Remember when Ric stripped down to his boxers in order to gain a match with Eric Bischoff for the WCW presidency? Didn't Flair get so excited during interviews that he dropped elbows on bare canvas? After losing a retirement match to Hulk Hogan in 1994, didn't Flair dress as a wom-





David seems to revel in mayhem (above left) and strange women such as his new girlfriend, Daphne (above right). Is this all his own personality coming to the fore, or is Ric somehow behind it?

an and attend some of the "Hulkster's" matches?

Yes, there are a few nuts in the Flair family tree.

But David Flair didn't always act like a wacko. Think back to January 1999 when David teamed with Ric against Curt Hennig and Barry Windham. David shocked everyone by pinning Hennig in that, his first-ever match, and he barely survived the belt-slapping beating he took from Hollywood Hogan and the New World Order afterward.

The next month, Ric had trapped WCW champ Hogan in a figure-four leglock when David ran into the ring and jolted his own father with a taser. He tried to develop a cool persona with Torrie Wilson at his side, but it wasn't believable.

David continued the charade when he rejoined his father who, at

that time, was WCW president. David dyed his hair blond and starting using Flair's entrance music. Six months later, Ric was edged out of WCW by the Powers-That-Be, leaving David on his own.

That's when David appeared to snap. The image is now surreal. When the strains of "Also Sprach Zarathustra" are heard, "a jet-flyin', limo-ridin' son of a gun" no longer emerges. Instead, it's a bleached-blond maniac, eyes bulging with dark circles underneath, brandishing a crowbar.

"It was very traumatic for David when Ric gracefully exited WCW," said long-time family friend and WCW broadcaster Tony Schiavone, "but I never imagined David was capable of turning into a raving lunatic. In fact, I didn't think he had that kind of intensity in him."

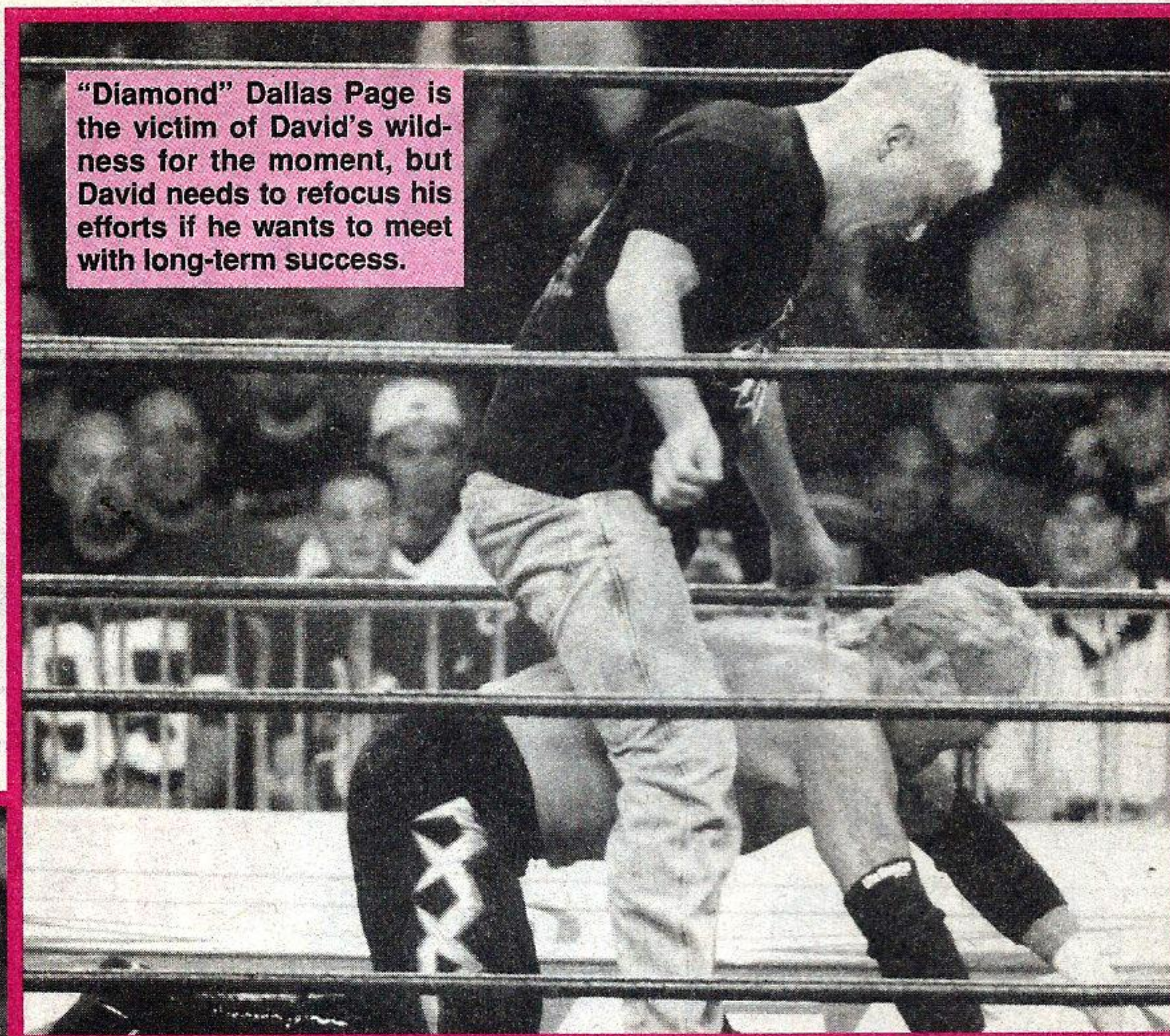
Ironically, that was the major criticism leveled at David earlier in the year: no intensity. He seemed so unsure of himself inside the ring and felt so pressured to uphold his father's legacy that he couldn't focus on a single goal without the NWO or Ric leading him by the hand.

"I've said many times that Ric Flair's major strength is his intensity and his ability to focus," continued Schiavone. "That's why he won so many world titles. Ric never gives up. That's the major quality David was lacking. David was too busy looking at the big picture, and it intimidated him. Now he shuts out the whole world while smashing a car hood with a crowbar. Now, if David can fine-tune that focus and intensity on something more productive, perhaps he can live up to expectations."

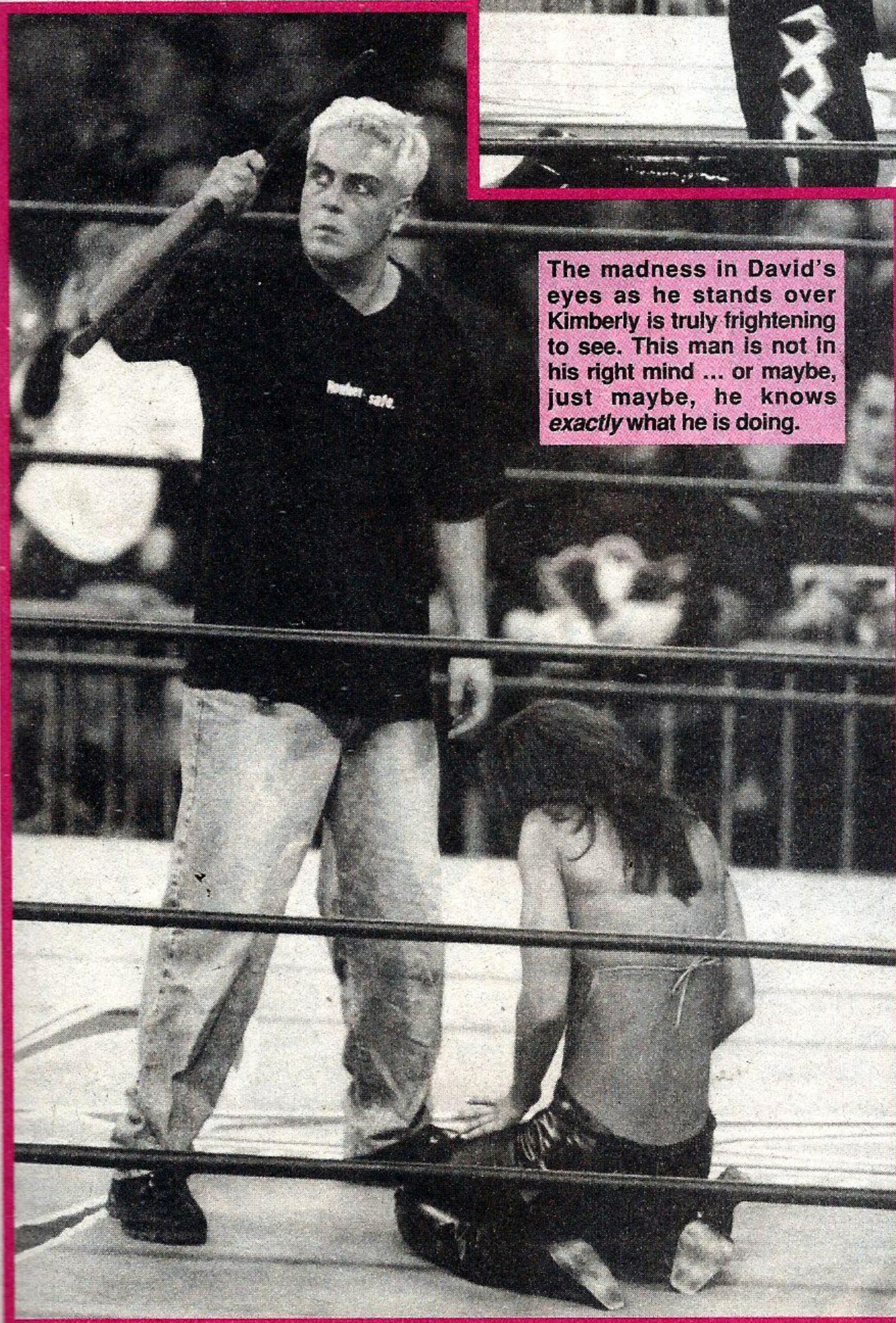
David rarely participates in one-on-one matches anymore. But when he does mix it up in a wrestling ring, it's clear he has made modest gains in terms of repertoire. His clotheslines have more snap, his suplexes have more hang time, and he doesn't stumble when wrapping a leg for the figure-four.

Does David realize how far he has advanced?

"I know wrestling holds! I'm a Flair! *Whooooooo!*" screamed David as his new girlfriend, Daphne, cackled in delight. "I'm stylin' and profilin'! I've got a new move! It's called the crowbar! Hee-hee! *Ahhhhhh* ...



"Diamond" Dallas Page is the victim of David's wildness for the moment, but David needs to refocus his efforts if he wants to meet with long-term success.



The madness in David's eyes as he stands over Kimberly is truly frightening to see. This man is not in his right mind ... or maybe, just maybe, he knows exactly what he is doing.

my head hurts!"

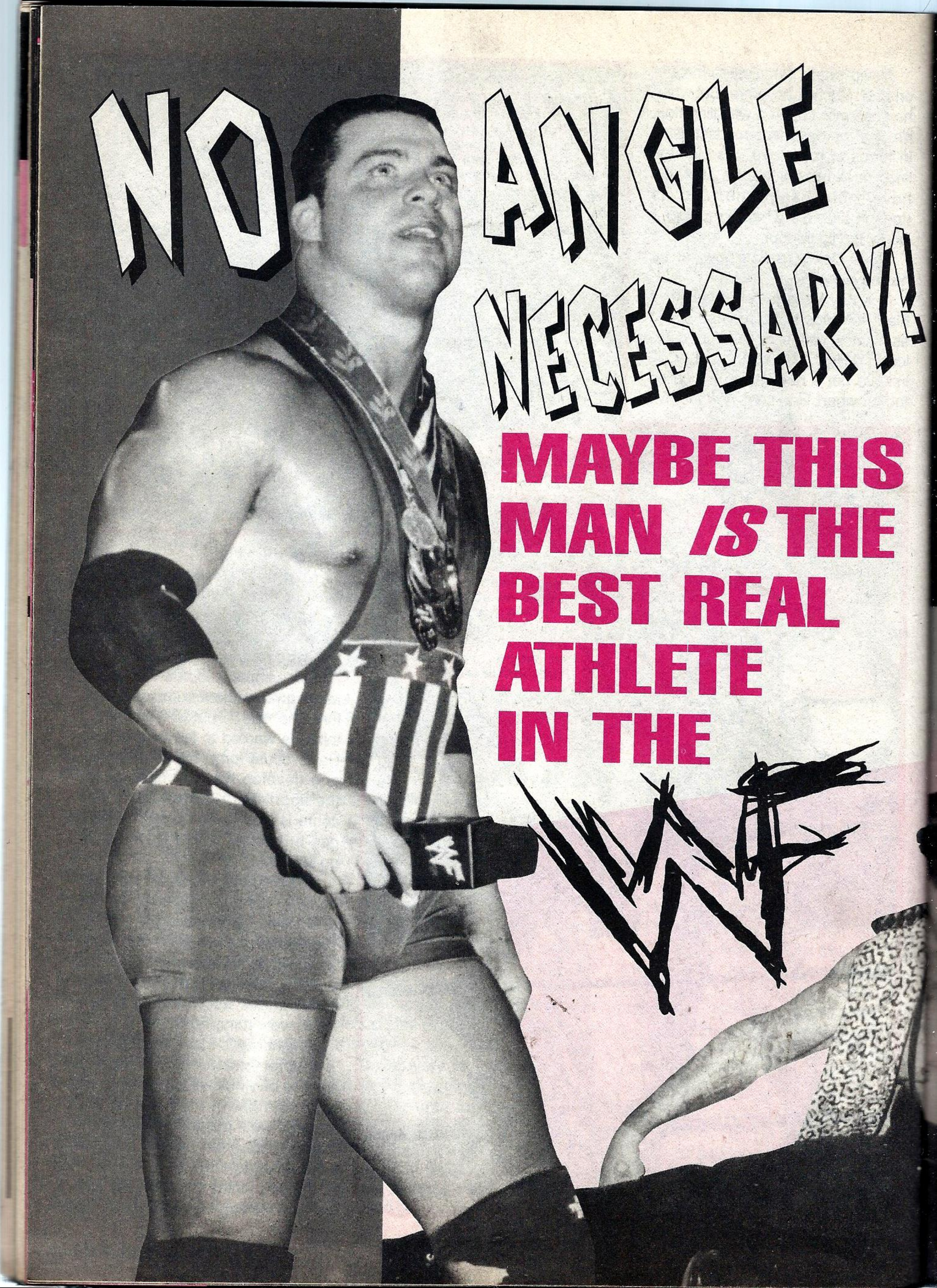
What does the elder Flair really think of this? Publicly, he doesn't comment. Schiavone, who probably knows Ric better than anybody, has his own theory.

"I was impressed how Ric kind of faded away without trumpets or fanfare," he said. "That isn't like him. I think he wanted to leave quietly so David could forge his own identity and develop his own passion for the sport. Ric realizes David has some issues to sort out. The danger, of course, is that David might go too far."

The nature of this father-son relationship remains unclear. Are Ric and David on speaking terms? Is Ric adopting a hands-off attitude to let David be his own man? Or is this another calculated ruse, like Ric's heart attack and nervous breakdown were rumored to be?

In light of Ric Flair's reputation as a master strategist, it's hard to believe he would sit idly by while his son acts like a maniac. For the record, we'll put this in the same category as heart attacks and nervous breakdowns.

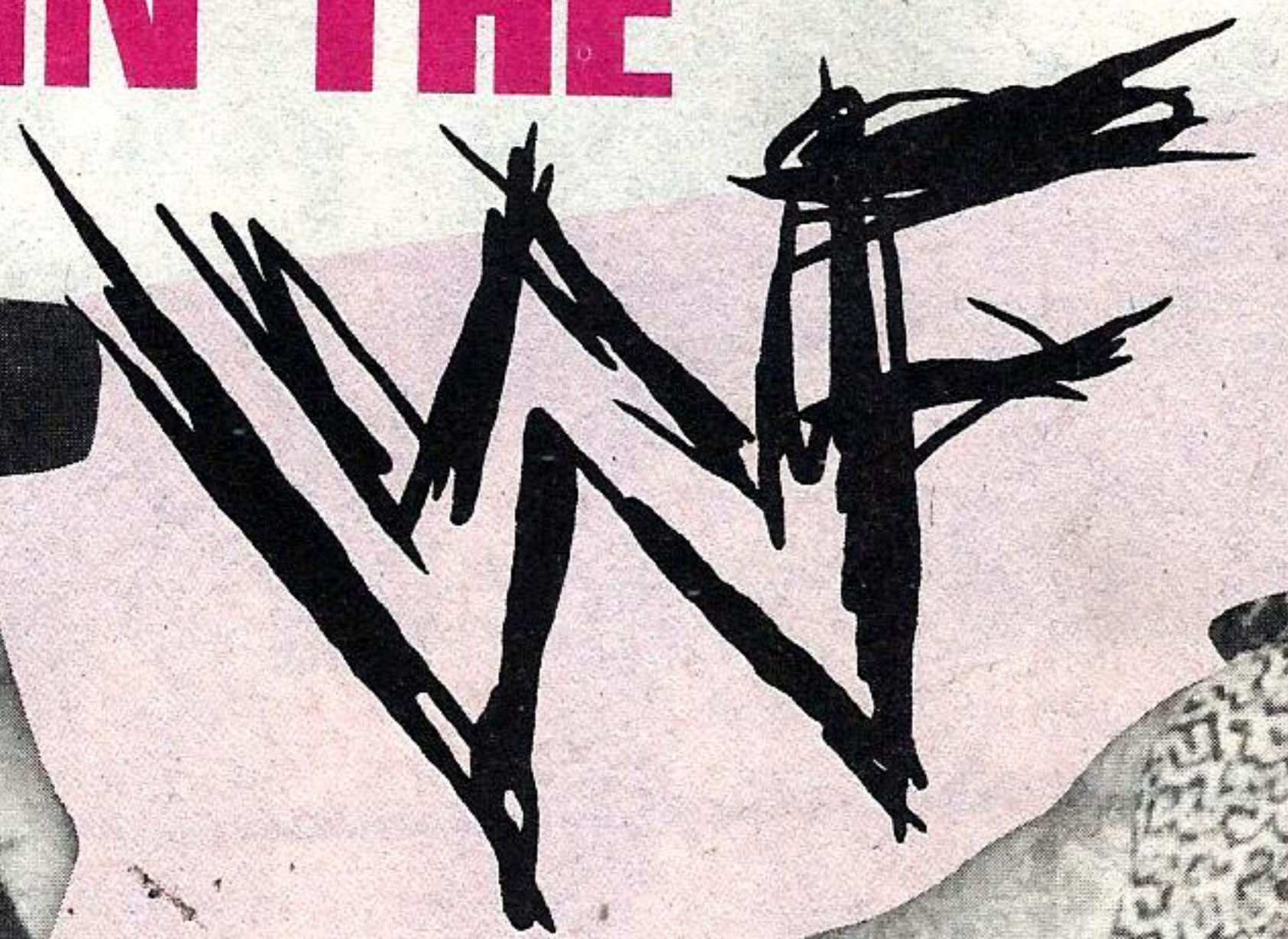
In the months to come, the truth will undoubtedly be revealed. □



NO

ANGLE
NECESSARY!

**MAYBE THIS
MAN IS THE
BEST REAL
ATHLETE
IN THE**





Kurt Angle (taking over Steve Bradley with a suplex) may be relatively bland in personality, but he's as expressive as can be in his dominating wrestling style.

The WWF's most feared competitor doesn't spew venom on the mike, try to end other wrestlers' careers, or lead a band of thugs. Incredibly, he's a good-natured fellow with a sense of fair play. What?!

By Harry Burkett

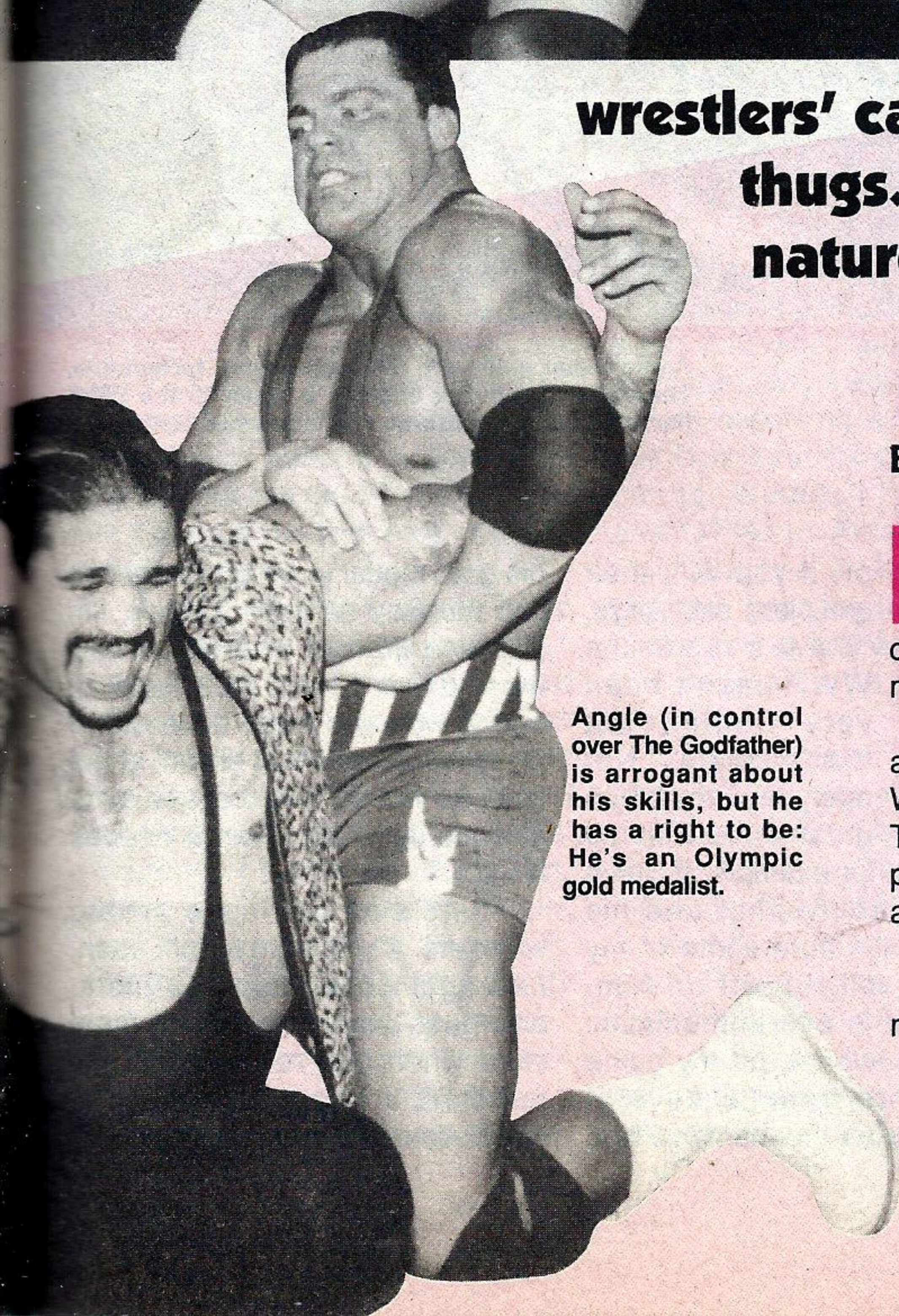
KURT ANGLE CLAIMS to be "the best real athlete in the WWF." It's great that a WWF superstar takes such pride in his athleticism, but what does that snide statement really mean?

It implies that other WWF competitors are not athletes. That's laughable, considering that the WWF is home to stars such as The Rock, Test, Triple-H, and X-Pac. Despite their flamboyance, personalities like Val Venis and The Godfather are tough, athletically gifted men.

Who does Angle think he is?

Actually, Angle is an Olympian who won a gold medal in wrestling.

Amateur standouts such as Rick and Scott Steiner, Bob Backlund, and Verne Gagne parlayed their skills into successful pro careers.



Angle (in control over The Godfather) is arrogant about his skills, but he has a right to be: He's an Olympic gold medalist.

Brad Rheingans, Mad Dog Vachon, The Iron Sheik, and Chris Taylor were all Olympic wrestlers. In fact, Taylor won the bronze medal ... but Angle is the only pro wrestler who has Olympic gold on his resume.

"I am the only real athlete in the WWF, and I owe that directly to my winning philosophy," smiled Angle. "That's the three I's: intensity, integrity, and intelligence. I'm certain that most current WWF superstars aspired to Olympic gold as young men, but only a precious few possess the intensity, integrity, and intelligence to succeed. With the guidance and

inspiration I can provide, the stars of the WWF will have new heights to which they can aspire."

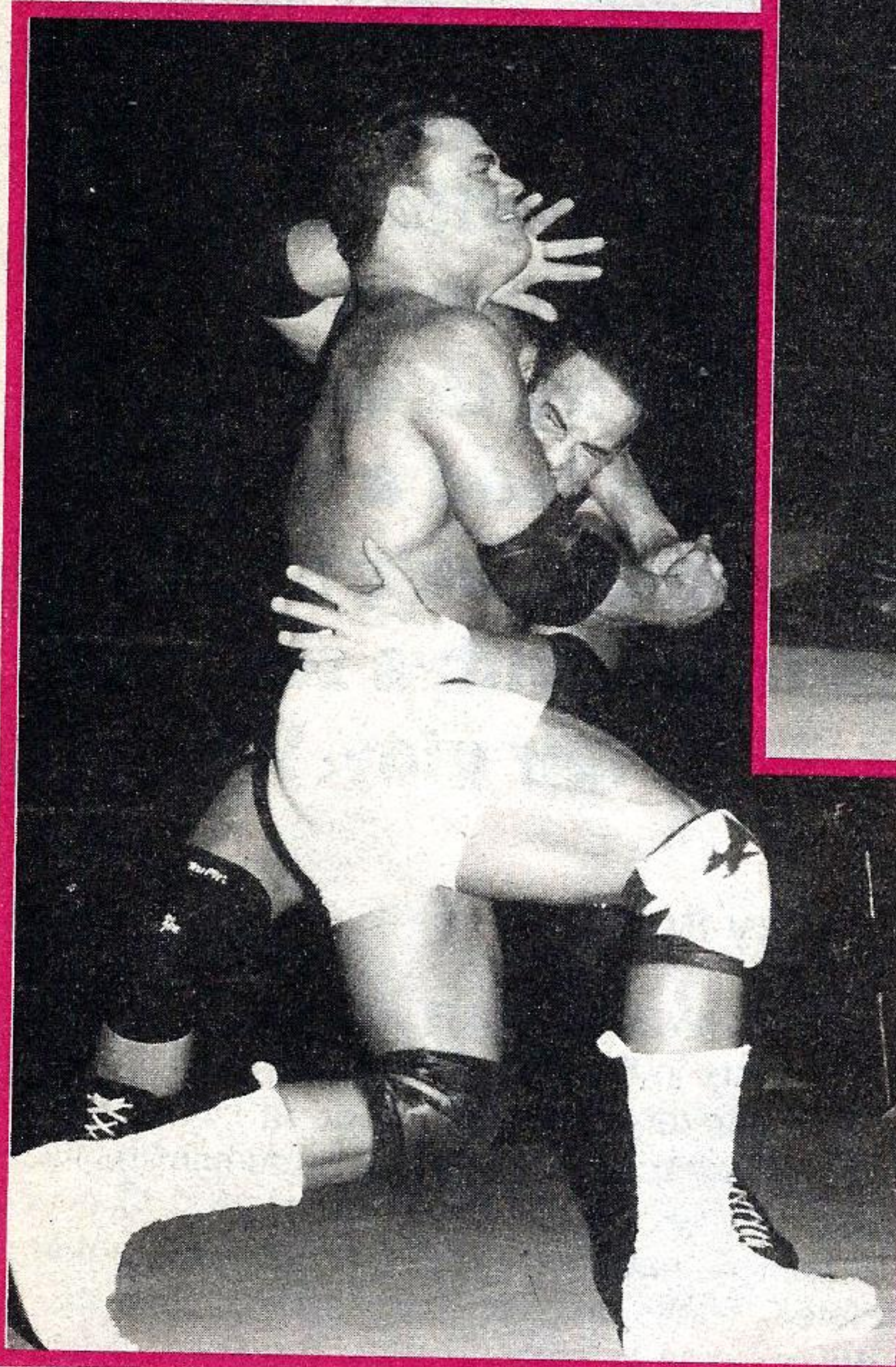
Angle, who as of press time had not lost a match since making his debut on WWF TV, has made short work of his opponents thus far. Steve Blackman, once an adversary, has been helping Angle accumulate victories. Angle seems oblivious to Blackman's assistance.

"Outstanding sports figures always have their loyal followers

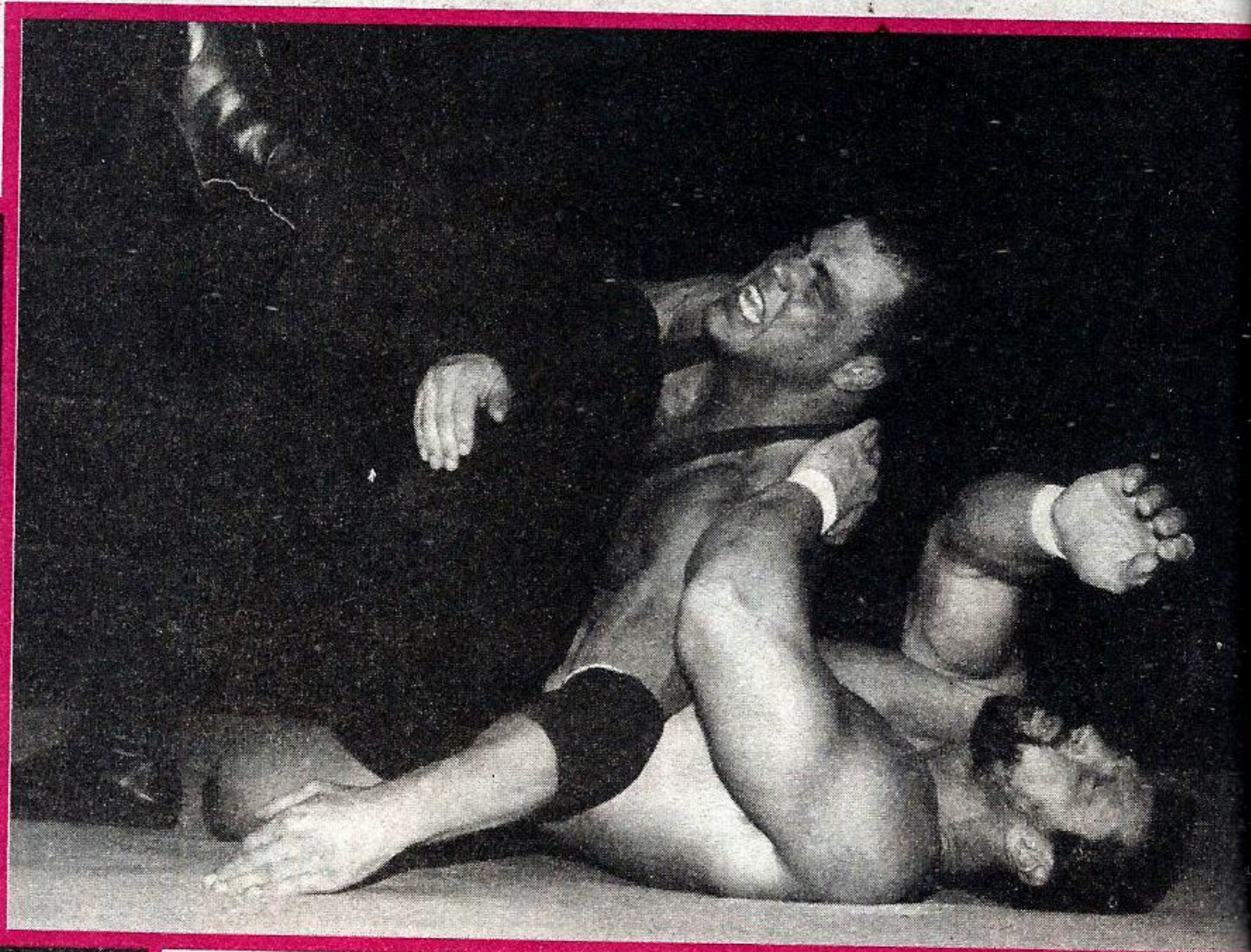
I'm able to regroup and score the win. I'm big enough to forgive Steve for his errors."

Angle is one of the most despised men in the WWF locker room. That's odd, considering the number of run-ins and double-crosses that occur on a weekly basis. Angle has never sneak-attacked or badmouthed anyone in a vicious way.

"No, he doesn't really bad-mouth anybody," agreed Mark Henry, who did not win an Olym-



Because he's arrogant and skilled, Angle (controlling Bradley) has become the one non-champion most WWF wrestlers would like to defeat.



Angle's mat skills are understandably formidable. There's probably not another wrestler in the WWF (including Blackman) who could beat him there.

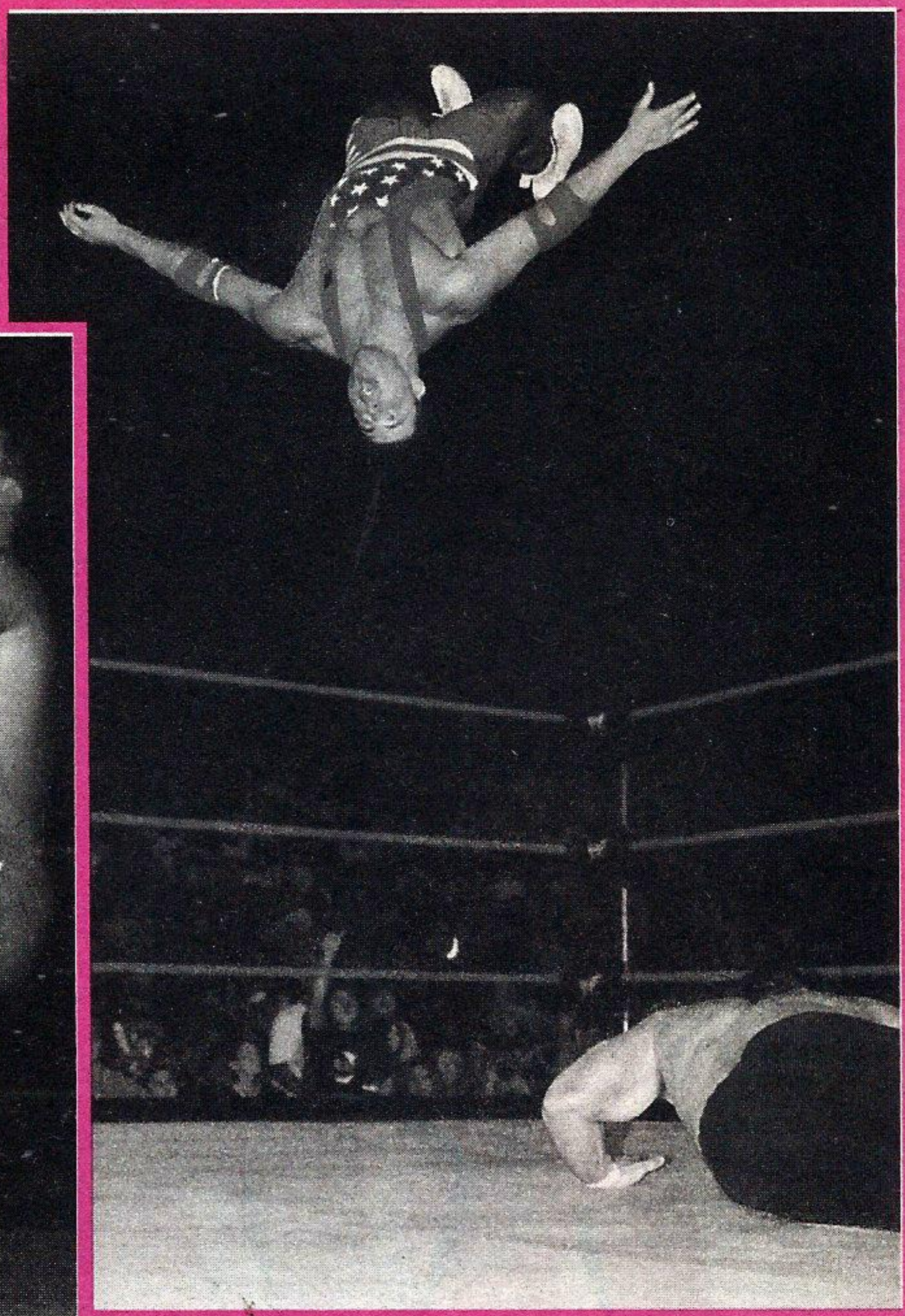
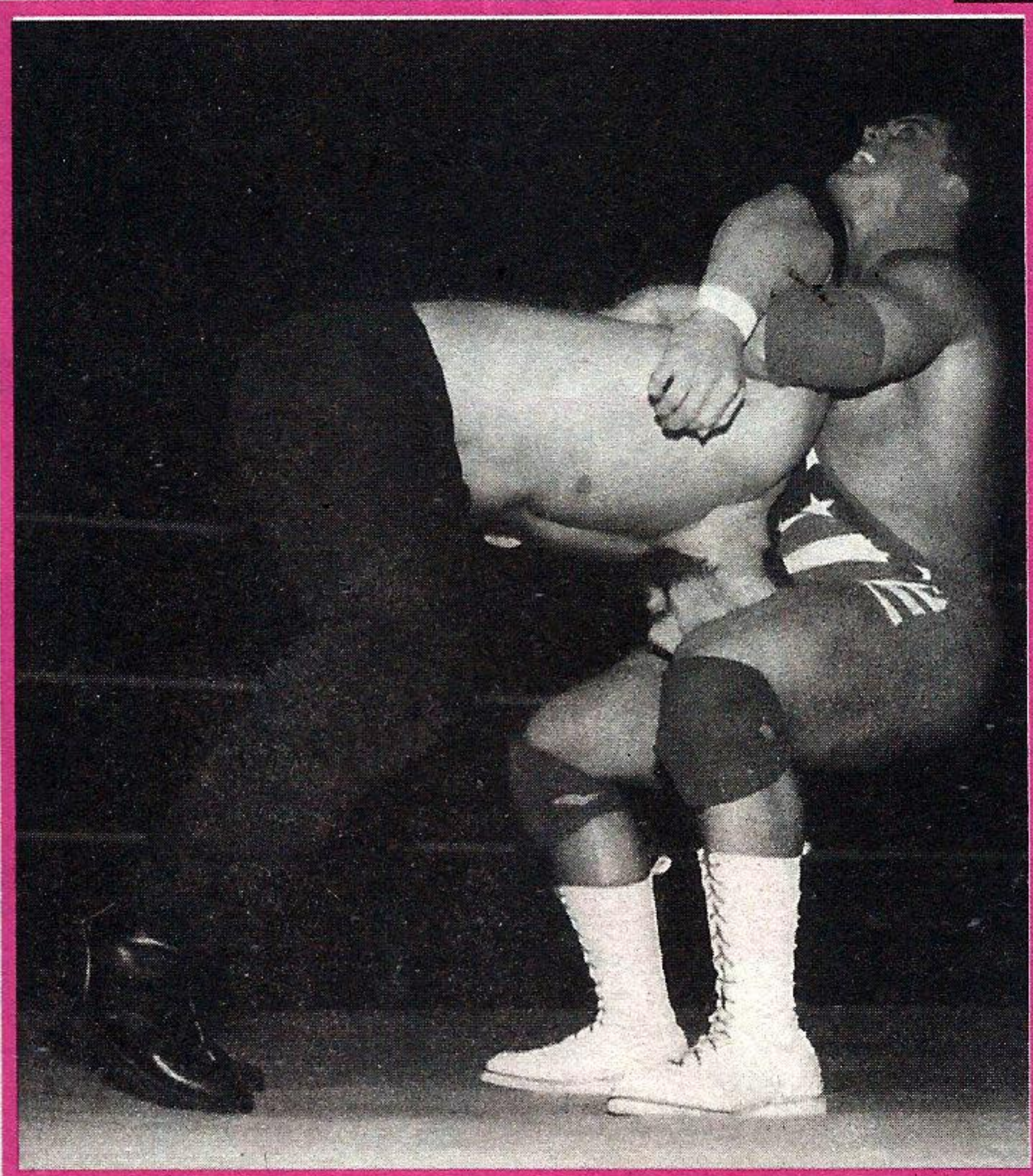
or, if you will, their groupies," said Angle. "Steve's run in the WWF hasn't been very fruitful, but that's okay. Not everyone can be as great as ... well, as

great as me, for example. If Steve keeps his mouth shut and his eyes open, I'm sure some of my greatness will rub off on him. True, Steve is overenthusiastic and he's thrown me off my game with his interference several times. Being the sportsman I am,

pic gold medal in weightlifting. "It's just the way he says it. Man, I'm sick and tired of Kurt sayin' how me and him were at the Olympics, but he won and I didn't. He said if he knew where I was stayin' at the time, he would have dropped by to give me tips. Man, I never needed his tips."

There's an odd code among wrestlers. It's all right to talk trash, turn against tag team partners, and bash someone with a steel chair when they're not looking... but don't act condescending, or you become an instant target.

Angle is hoping to duplicate the excellence of his mat skills (below) in the air (right). If he can accomplish that, he could become virtually unbeatable.



"Some of the guys say they want to take Kurt out," added Henry. "He had the nerve to ask Mae (Young) whether they had Olympics when she was young. That smug attitude is gonna get him in real trouble. I have to admit it, though: In the ring, Kurt is damn good."

Plenty of WWF stars have expressed an interest in embarrassing or injuring Angle, but there are three reasons why no one has tried. One, nobody wants to cross Blackman or his bag of weapons in order to get to Angle. Second, Stephanie McMahon-Helmsley often praises Angle, and no one wants to anger her. Third, Angle's technical ability intimidates would-be opponents.

Although most fans now embrace anti-heroes, aren't there a few people who respect Angle's

pride in accomplishment?

"Absolutely, Kurt's developing a cult following," said WWF commentator Jerry Lawler. "The three I's are becoming as important as the Dudleys' three commandments. Wouldn't every mother and father in America love for their daughter to bring home an Olympic gold medalist? Look at his beaming smile and listen to the pep talks he gives arena crowds.

"It doesn't matter if you're trailer trash or a second-grade dropout—anybody can succeed if they follow the three I's. That's a positive message, if you ask me!"

Indeed, Angle is a throwback to the old days, when the sport was divided into scientific wrestlers and rulebreakers. There was no such thing as a good guy who broke the rules. The Road

Warriors started the turnaround, but the evolution wasn't complete until Steve Austin became wrestling's biggest star 15 years later.

Angle is a throwback to the days of Backlund and Gagne. They didn't need gimmicks or television writers to help them get over with the fans. They considered blandness a virtue because their skills were enough to overwhelm opponents and keep them on top.

Kurt Angle is plain, with a tinge of arrogance. Maybe fans are insulted that Angle doesn't try to entertain them. People hate him because he's so talented. The only way to stop Angle's momentum is to defeat him fairly in the ring.

Is there anyone in the WWF who can do it? □

Could This Man End Up Being ECW's Best?

RHINO

By Dan Murphy

THE SANDMAN STILL remembers his exact words when he found out he'd be wrestling Rhino on November 26 at the Shrine Temple in Trenton, New Jersey.

"Rhino?" Sandman asked aloud, turning to his partner, Tommy Dreamer. "Ain't he the 'rookie monster' who pals around with Steve Corino?" He was clearly mocking the nickname that has attached itself to Rhino.

Sandman was actually only half-right, though. While Rhino does associate with self-professed "Old School Icon" Steve Corino, he is hardly a rookie. He has five full years of experience. Formerly known as Rhino Richards, he competed for several years in independent promotions throughout Michigan and parts of Canada. He toiled in some of the same territories that produced current WWF stars Edge and Christian. He also has extensive experience in Europe, where he wrestled in Otto Wanz' Catch Wrestling Association.

In 1997, Rhino cracked the "PWI 500" at number 398, just 50 spots behind Corino. The following year, he fell out of the "500" completely. That oversight frustrated Rhino,

**ECW's next World
heavyweight
champion could
very easily be
Rhino. Don't
laugh. It's not as
outrageous as it
might seem!**

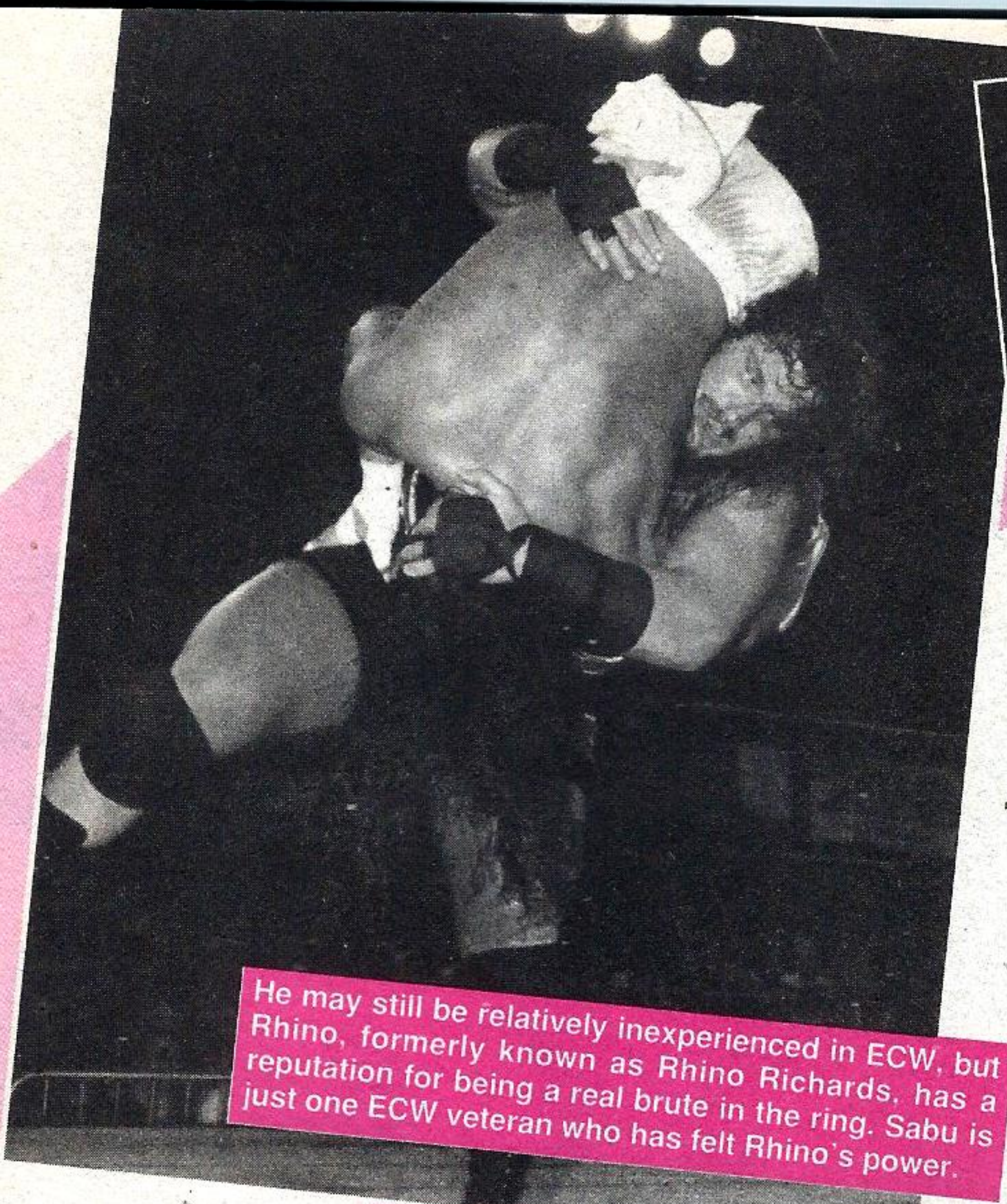


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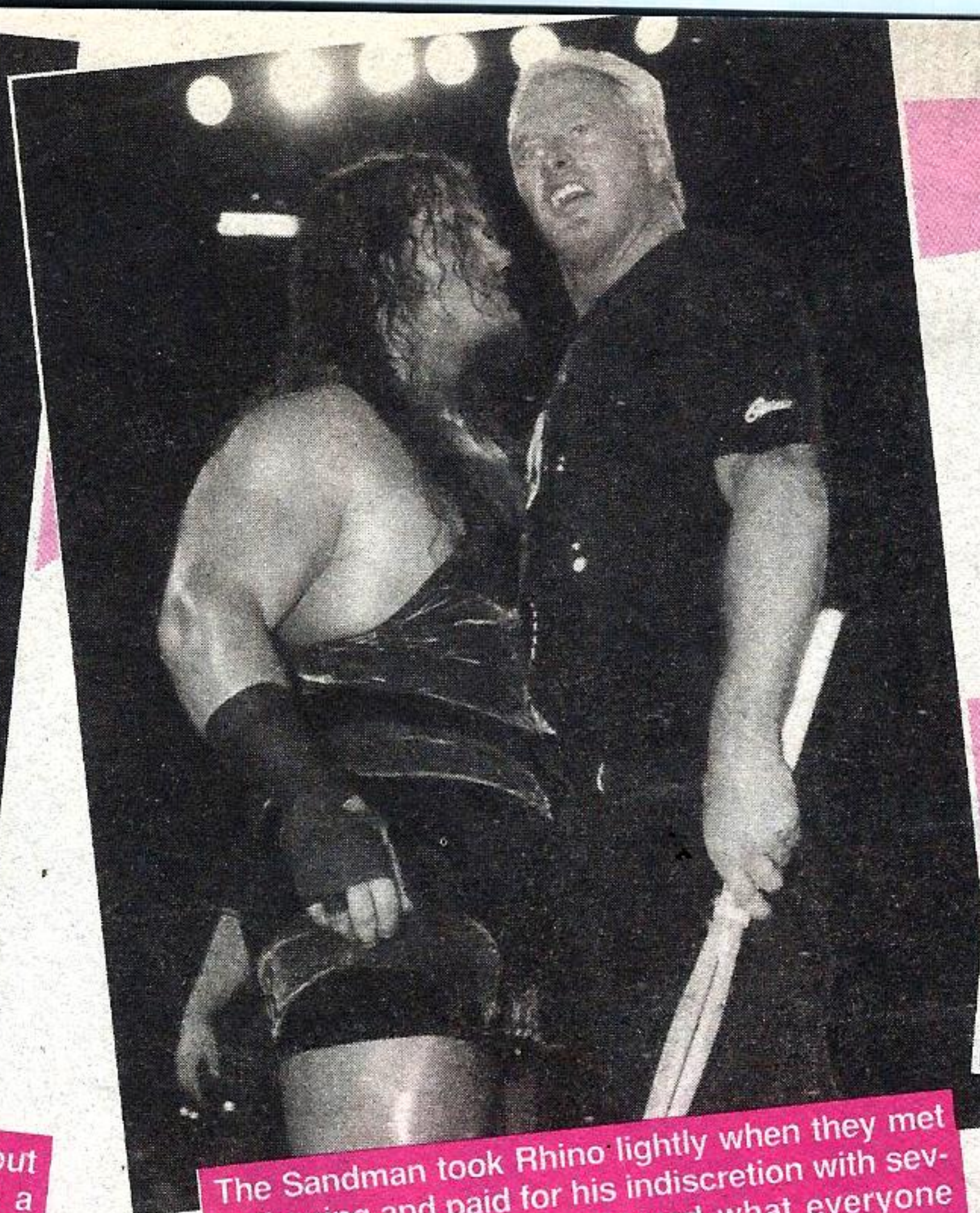
and the young powerhouse swore he would never be overlooked again.

Through intense training and unavailing dedication, the 289-pound Detroit native caught the eye of ECW owner Paul Heyman, who offered him a chance to show what he could do. Though he came out on the losing end of several of his ECW matches, Rhino was impressive in early efforts against Yoshihiro Tajiri and Jerry Lynn, and last year, he returned to the "500" at number 241. At the time, we wrote of him, "He has yet to make it out of preliminary matches."

As much as it might pain ECW fans to admit it, Corino has done a lot to change that. Corino, whose big mouth had made him an enemy of Taz and Tommy Dreamer, realized he needed some extra muscle in his corner, so the Corino/Rhino partnership was formed. Because Corino was immersed in high-profile feuds, it followed that his protege would start getting high-profile matches.



He may still be relatively inexperienced in ECW, but Rhino, formerly known as Rhino Richards, has a reputation for being a real brute in the ring. Sabu is just one ECW veteran who has felt Rhino's power.



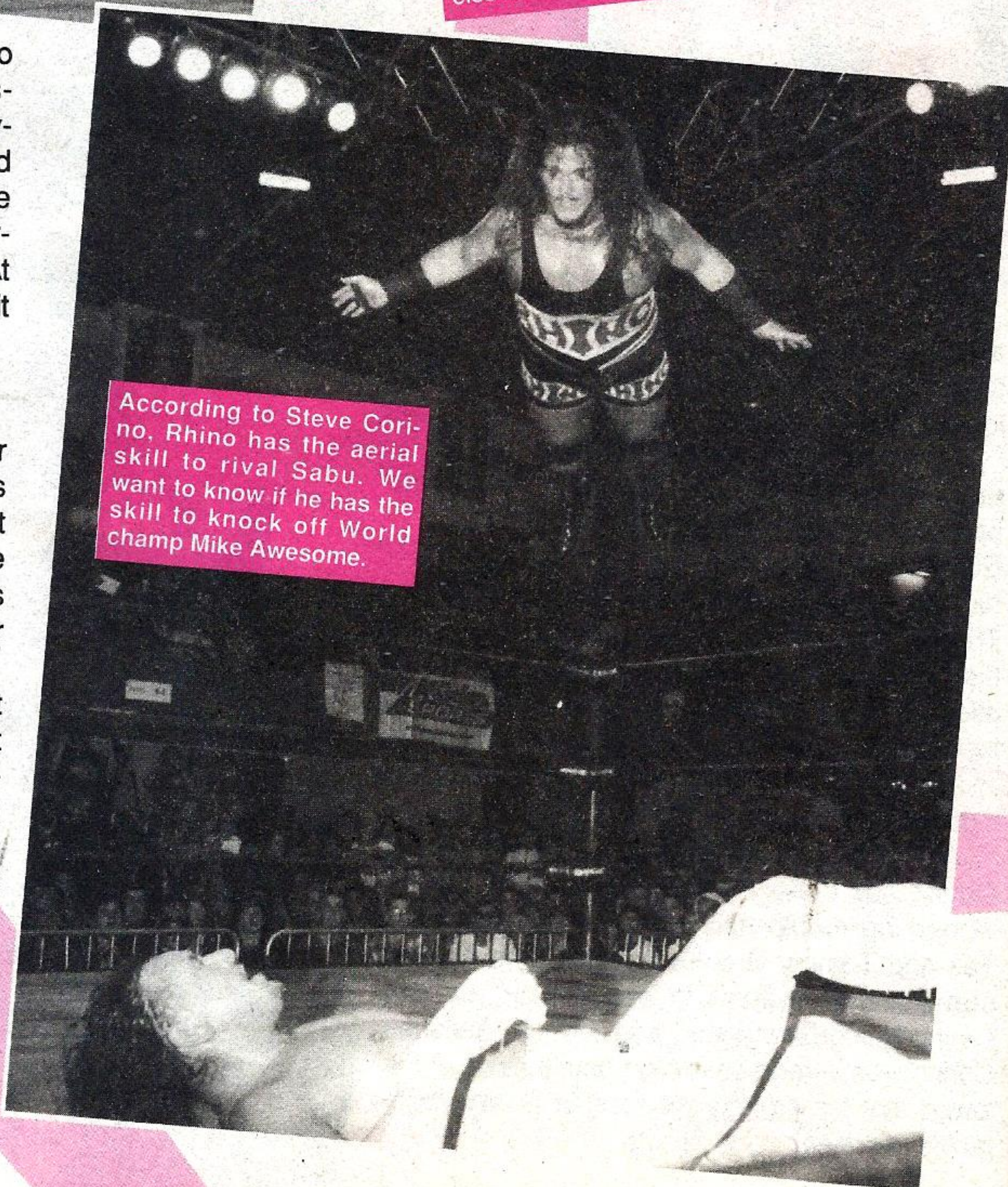
The Sandman took Rhino lightly when they met in the ring and paid for his indiscretion with several losses. Sandman learned what everyone else in ECW is finding out: Rhino is for real!

None of this mattered much to Sandman the day after Thanksgiving. The four-time ECW heavy-weight champ was more concerned with Raven's desertion at the November to Remember pay-per-view. Rhino was a tuneup match. At least that's what Sandman figured it would be.

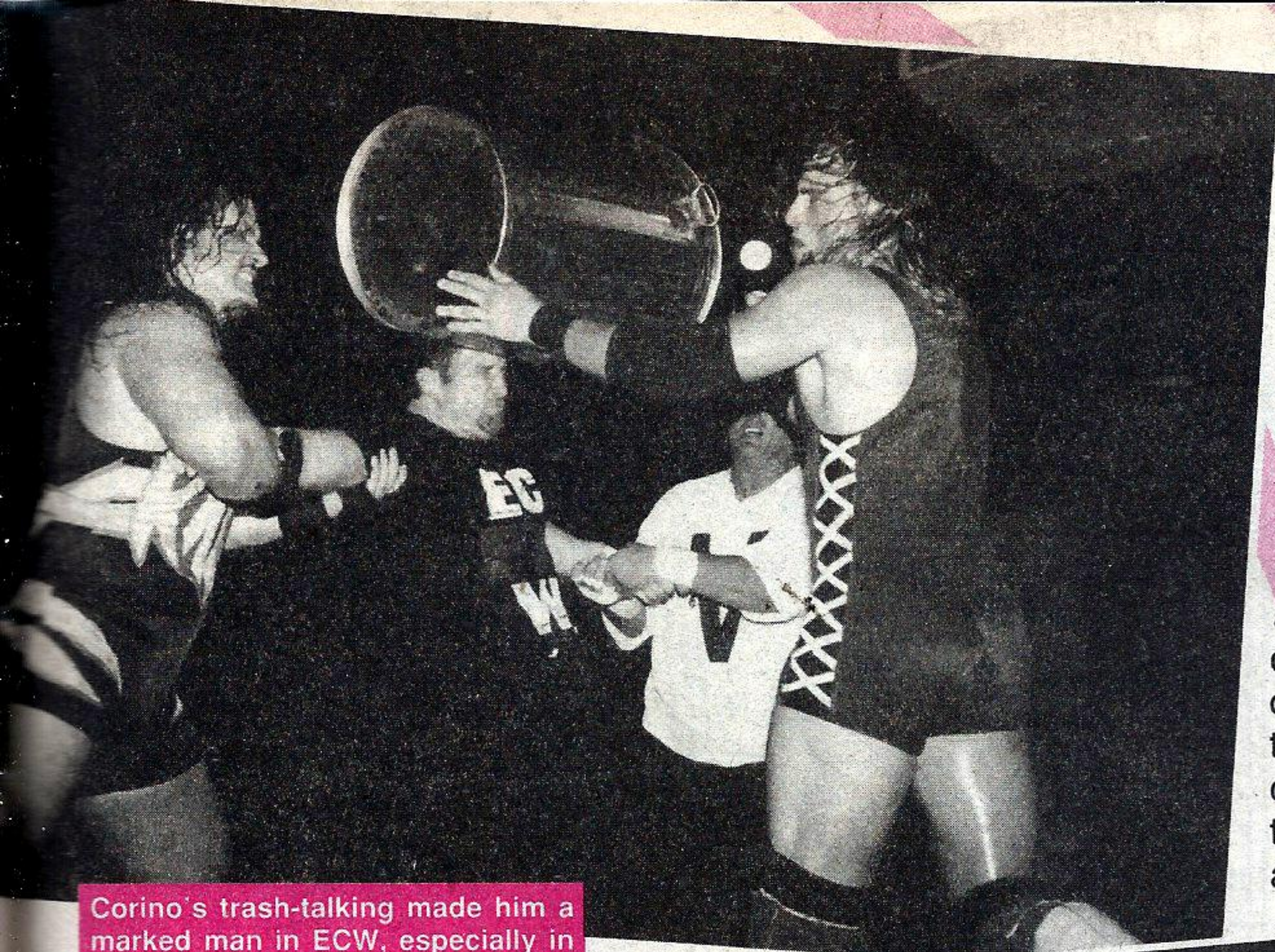
Of course, he figured wrong.
Very wrong.

Tonight wouldn't be just another night at the office for Sandman—as Rhino pulled off the biggest upset of his career by defeating the "Hardcore Icon." Everyone was shocked, but Rhino didn't consider it an upset at all.

"It was a big win, but I don't understand how people can say it was an upset," Rhino said. "Sandman's done some great things in ECW, but, let's face it, he can't match my strength. I'm the most powerful man in ECW, and I've got a whole arsenal of moves I haven't even shown anyone yet. The way I see it, I should be the top contender to the ECW World title, because there's no one in ECW that can stop me."



According to Steve Corino, Rhino has the aerial skill to rival Sabu. We want to know if he has the skill to knock off World champ Mike Awesome.



Corino's trash-talking made him a marked man in ECW, especially in the eyes of Tommy Dreamer, so he turned to Rhino for protection. Rhino can actually benefit from an association with Corino. He already has, actually.

Surprisingly, Rhino may be right. Just about the only man in ECW who might enjoy a power advantage over him is the 285-pound Mike Awesome. However, Rhino's compact build and astounding leg strength should be enough to allow him to overcome Awesome's height and leverage advantage. And with Taz gone to the WWF, Dreamer plagued by chronic injuries, and Sandman and Raven itching to face one another, Rhino is in a position to challenge Awesome for the ECW strap. Is he really good enough to *win* ECW's premier title?

"The kid's tough," Sandman replied. "I didn't take him seriously, and he snuck up on me. But one win don't make a guy a world champion. Him and Chris Candido had a decent team, but Candido's gone now, and Rhino hasn't looked too good against Rob Van Dam. Maybe he can make it, but don't give him too much credit yet."

Just for the record, Rhino has gone on to defeat Sandman several additional times.

Of course, Corino disagrees with

Sandman's assessment. "Rhino and I have trained together, and I've seen him bench over 500 pounds. And you should see him come off the top rope!" Corino said. "There's more to Rhino than raw power. The thing is, Rhino isn't a part of the old boys' club around here, so people don't take him seriously. I'm sure he's going to beat some other so-

called top guys around here in the next few months. After all, I taught him everything he knows."

Rhino may not be ECW's top contender, and he may be a little too raw to make a serious run at the ECW title right now, but he does have some very obvious strengths. First of all, there's his obvious strength. Then there are his associations with Corino and Candido. Though Corino tends to embellish the truth, the fact is, he's a skilled technical wrestler. Candido, though no longer with the company, has been one of ECW's top stars and is a former WWF tag champion. He's able to mix brawling tactics with scientific skills, and he is a master of the psychological aspect of the game.

What Rhino learned from Candido and what he can still learn from Corino should help him immeasurably. He has kept his mouth closed and made very few true enemies. While others bicker, Rhino focuses on getting better.

Finally, there's the mystery factor: There is still much that remains unknown about this guy. Does he have the aerial skills Corino describes? How far is he willing to go to win a match? Has he learned from his early losses to Tajiri and Lynn? Does he have the stamina to compete exclusively as

a singles wrestler? Can he capitalize on the fact that there's no clear-cut top contender and procure a title shot?

It's a safe bet that Rhino will answer all of these questions and more in the upcoming year, because although 2000 is the year of the dragon on the Chinese calendar, in ECW, it's looking more and more like the year of the Rhino. □



Justin Credible gets ready for a ride. Rhino is among the strongest men in wrestling and possibly the strongest in ECW. Few wrestlers can counter his power or intensity.

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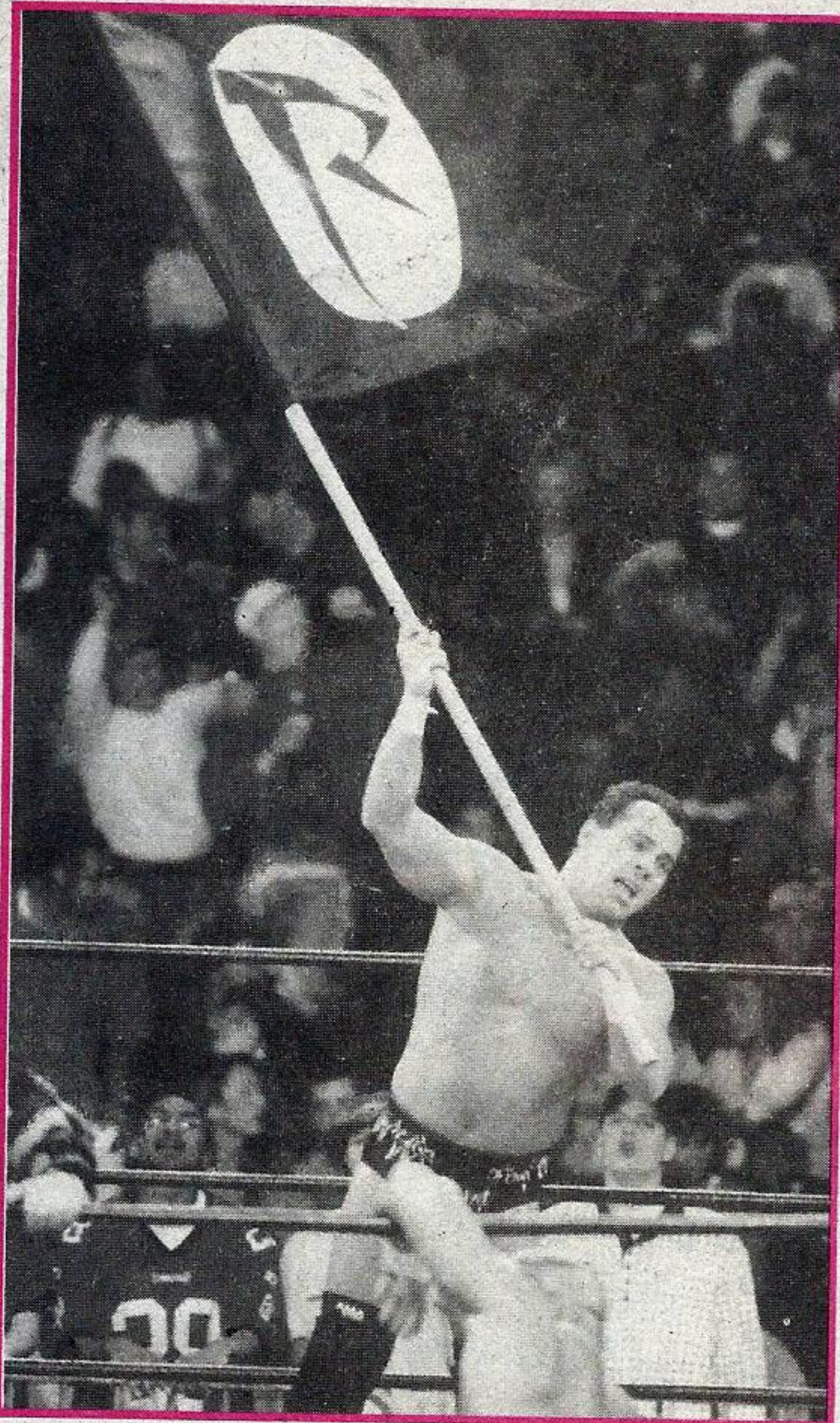
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YOUR LETTERS

(Continued from page 5)



Dean Malenko raises the flag of The Revolution. Korean War veteran Merle R. Kratzer was offended to see Dean Malenko and friends disgrace Old Glory.

Malenko and The Revolution abuse the American flag. I hope WCW loses its television license for showing that travesty on *Nitro*.

MERLE R. KRATZER
Reno, NV

CEASE AND DESIST

At the risk of sounding like another old-timer who just doesn't get it, I have to say I'm dismayed that the involvement of company owners in on-camera storylines is not just another phase of the wrestling business. In fact, Vince McMahon and now the Powers-That-Be are becoming even more visible on *Raw* and *Nitro*, and McMahon especially hasn't shown any inclination of reducing his roles.

As a fan, I pay good money on my cable bill, on pay-per-view events, and on live shows. I expect to see athletes perform, not pencil-pushers like Russo and Ferrara.

Today, people call wrestling "sports entertainment" or a soap opera, but once upon a time, it used to be called wrestling because the people who participated in it were real wrestlers who actually wrestled.

THEODORE GOODE III
Cleveland, OH

VIEWER'S LAMENT

In all the years I've watched wrestling, nothing bummed me out more than watching Mankind get fired from the WWF for no good reason.

Mankind is a loyal and valuable member of the WWF. Year after year, Mankind turns in memorable matches. More

than that, I don't know of any fan who doesn't love Mankind or at least respect the effort he gives when he's in the ring.

The change in Stephanie McMahon since she's teamed up with Hunter Hearst Helmsley is very sad. She's gone from being a charming young lady to a power-hungry witch in a matter of weeks.

With Mankind gone from the WWF, I think fans will stop watching WWF events. Then where will have all of Hunter and Stephanie's spite have gotten them?

DANEY FIGGS
Chicago, IL ☐

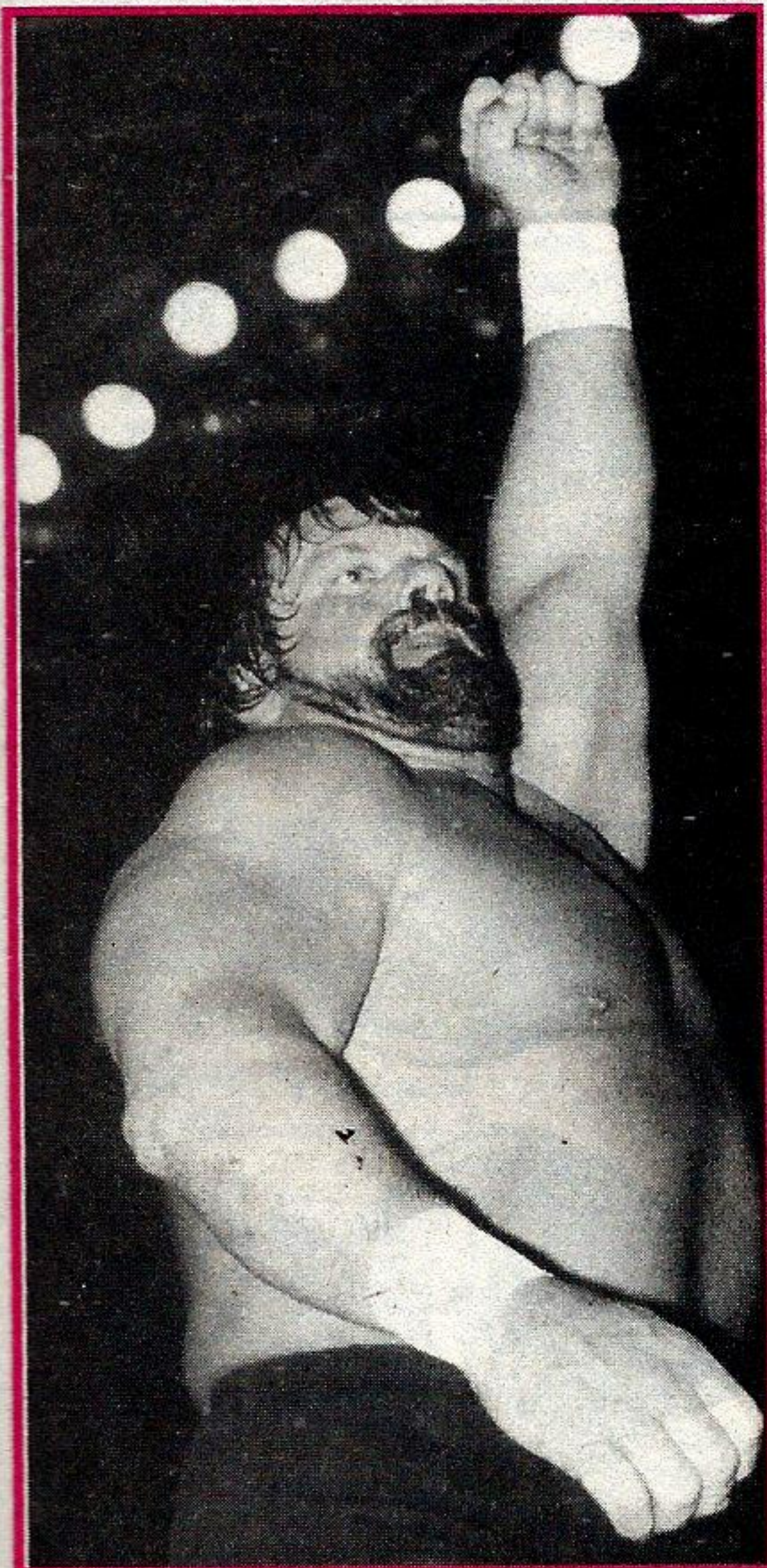
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WHAT'S HAPPENING

(Continued from page 7)

chance Coraluzzo could mend his fences with the board in the future. Coraluzzo said he plans to continue promoting on his own.

Chris Candido, **Tammy Lynn Sytch**, and **Axl Rotten** have all been fired from ECW ... It may not conjure images of **Lou Thesz** facing "**Whipper**" **Billy Watson**, or **Ric Flair** battling **Rick Steamboat**, but **Psychotica** became the new Hardcore Wrestling Alliance cruiserweight champion by beating **Velocità** in a tournament final on December 26 in Charlotte, North Carolina ... After lackluster stints in the WWF and WCW over the past two years, "**Dr. Death**" **Steve Williams** seems to have regained his competitive fire in Japan. On January



Steve Williams has returned to the Far East, where he is climbing the All-Japan Pro Wrestling ratings. Williams has also had success teaming with George Hines.

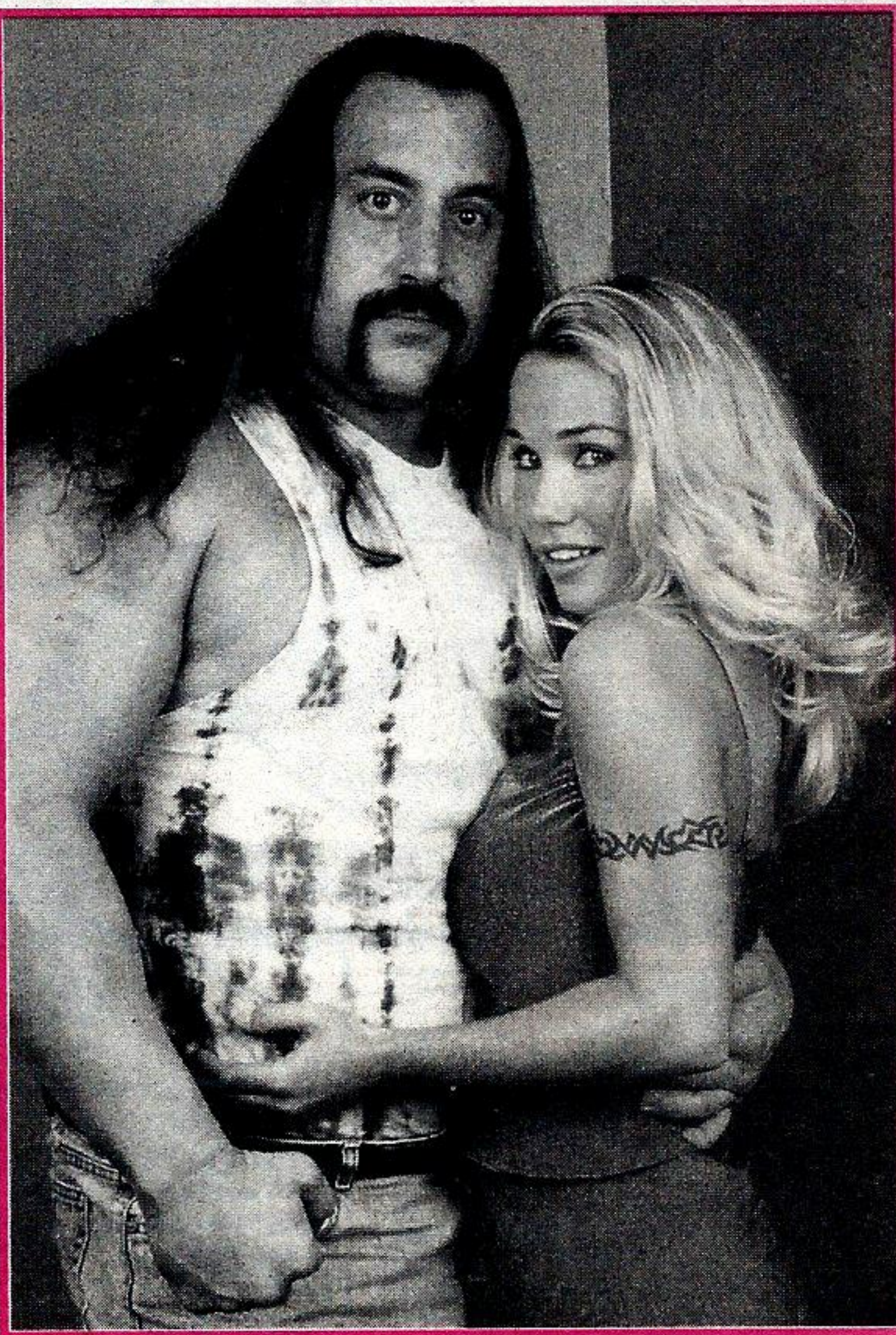
2, Williams teamed with **George Hines** to defeat **Masao Inoue** and **Tamon Honda** on an All-Japan Pro Wrestling card.

While it may be no more than a coincidence, several sources have told me that **Tori** and **The Undertaker** had at least two clandestine meetings in the final days of 1999. It is unclear what was discussed, but Kane had better be suspicious of his girlfriend's recent accusations regarding **Test** and **The Rock**.

You may know him as **Crowbar**, but **Devon Storm** has been one of the most explosive talents in the East Coast independents for the past few years. If **David Flair** can come back to reality for just a little while, he could stand to learn a lot from his new partner. And if Storm survives his relationship with Flair, he could quickly become one of WCW's top cruiserweights—and perhaps even a heavyweight contender.

It's almost like ECW—**Chastity** and **Public Enemy** have made extreme homecomings, only now they are competing in Xtreme Pro Wrestling in California. Wonder if they had a sense of déjà vu on their first day back? On a related note, "**Big**" **Dick Dudley** is your new Xtreme Pro Wrestling heavyweight champion. He beat **Damien Steele** on December 18 in Hollywood, California.

Reports have **Bill Goldberg** needing 40 stitches to close lacerations on his right arm after he punched out the windows of an NWO limousine on *Nitro* on De-



Dick Dudley (posing with Kristi Myst) recently defeated Damien Steele to win the XPW heavyweight title. Joining Dudley in XPW are former ECW mates Chastity and Public Enemy.

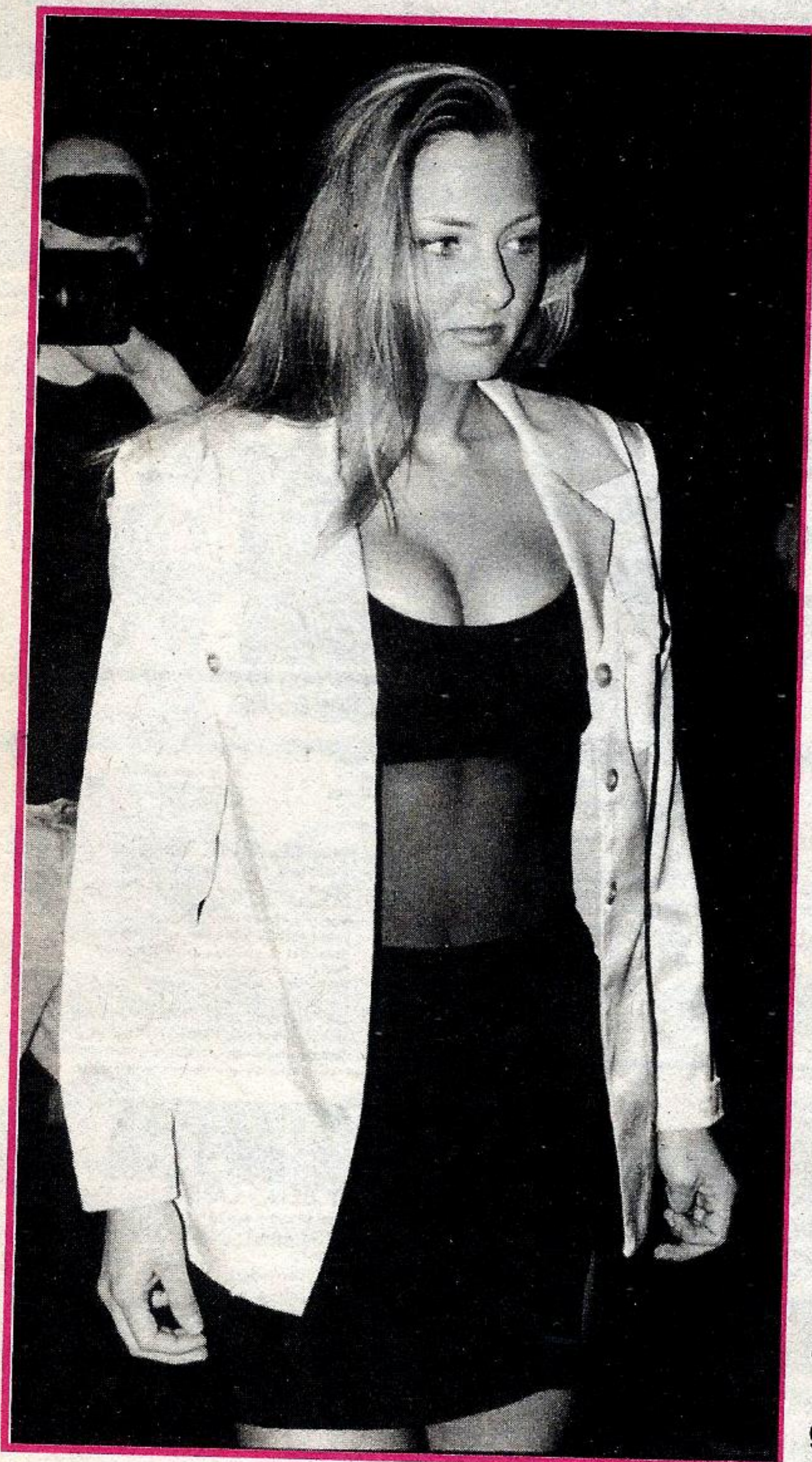
cember 21. Goldberg required emergency reconstructive surgery on a tendon after the injury. "**Macho Man**" **Randy Savage** took Goldberg's place (and lost) in a New Japan match against **Rick Steiner** on January 4 at the Tokyo Dome. Goldberg is expected to return to the ring by the time you read this.

Though he had been dropping hints of a forthcoming retirement, **Mick Foley** said he will not accept the stipulation of the pink-slip-on-a-pole match he lost against **The Rock**. "Only I will decide when it's time for Mankind to ride off into the sunset," Foley said. "I think I've still got another World title left in me, and Triple-H is back in the hotseat."

That's what's happening. Catch ya in 30. □

NO HOLDS BARRED

(Continued from page 8)



Bringing back the provocative Beulah McGillicutty was just one of the strong strategic moves by the designers of *Hardcore Revolution*. Not foreign to the market having produced games for the WWF in the past, Acclaim knows what fans of wrestling video games want to see.

like it—I quietly glanced up at Dreamer, and though I felt bad for doing it, I abandoned him.

I hit the reset button, grabbed a few Planters, stuffed them in my mouth, wiped my greasy hand on my jeans (hey, I'm all class), and waited for the prompt screen to come up again.

You see, I had been playing a video game, and quite a good one at that.

ECW's first video game, *Hard-*

core Revolution, has everything necessary to satisfy even the most finicky fans of wrestling gamedom.

The game, produced by Acclaim and designed by Acclaim Studios-Salt Lake, features more than 40 ECW stars, including special ones such as the late Louie Spicolli, The Original Sheik, and my favorite returning ECW star (at least to the video game, anyway), Beulah McGillicutty. The game is run on Acclaim's wrestling game engine, which, of course, has been tinkered with and tinkered with since being featured on older games such as *WWF Attitude* and *WWF Warzone*.

Because the engine has been updated, the game play is flawlessly smooth, and not just in one-on-one mode, either. The Tag Team, Tor-

nado, and Stable modes are as fast-paced and action-packed as possible.

Like other wrestling games, *Hardcore Revolution* features a career mode, in which you can start off as a rookie wrestling on house shows and work your way up to *ECW On TNN* and, if you're good enough, pay-per-views. Believe me, just because it's a video game, don't think that getting the chance to main event

Anarchy Rulz is going to be easy—unless you cheat, of course.

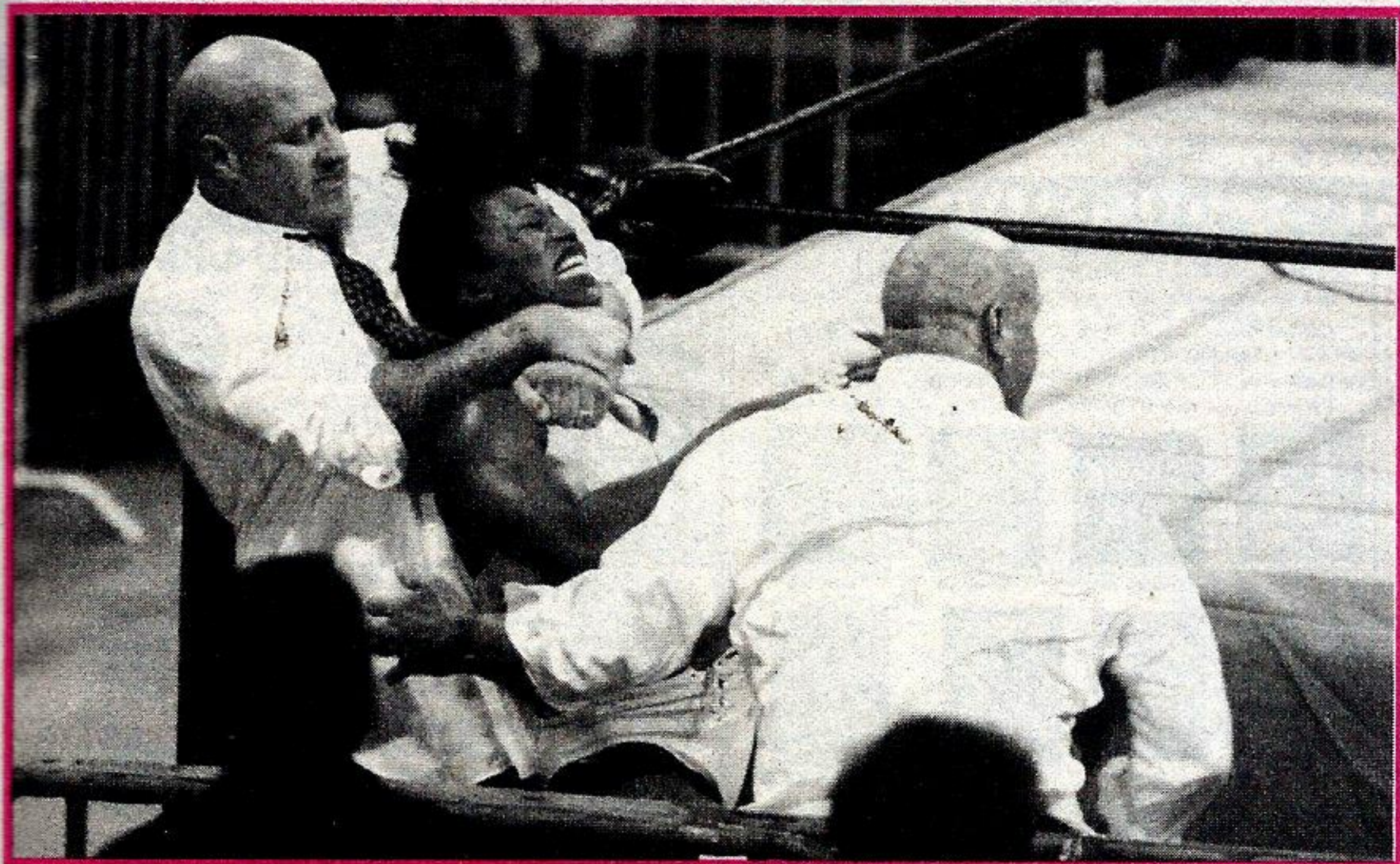
If you really want to main event Anarchy Rulz and want to do it the day you buy the game (which I consider cheating, but which many consider using the game to its utmost potential), you must first use the Create-A-Wrestler option, of which Acclaim is the originator. For *Hardcore Revolution*, Acclaim has taken Create-A-Wrestler, tweaked it, and expanded upon it. With customizable move sets, new costumes, and all-new facial characteristics, Create-A-Wrestler can conjure up just about anyone—including me (which, of course, is how I got the lucky chance to wrestle Raven).

After designing yourself, or a somewhat altered version thereof (don't we all like to make ourselves more impressive than we actually are?), you then head to the Create Your Own Pay-Per-View Mode, in which you set up eight matches using all game modes and arena settings available. After all that is accomplished, you fight it out, and only the most extreme warrior will emerge the victor.

Although I feel *Hardcore Revolution* does have some shortcomings (I really want to see a game in which the managers and valets accompany their wrestlers to the ring, and the game can get a little too graphic for younger gamers, which is why it carries an M rating—so parents, beware), it is a very good opening salvo for ECW into the video game market. Now all I have to do is get the nerve to step inside the barbed wire for a second time. Believe me, Raven will go down—it's just going to take a little time for me to learn all those darn button combinations. □

YOU ASKED US

(Continued from page 16)



This is probably the last time you will see Ron and Don Harris wearing suits. They have given up corporate stoogery in favor of blatant goonery.

names, Ron and Don Harris. I would like to ask Ron and Don what exactly prompted this change.”—Dan Queter, Providence, RI

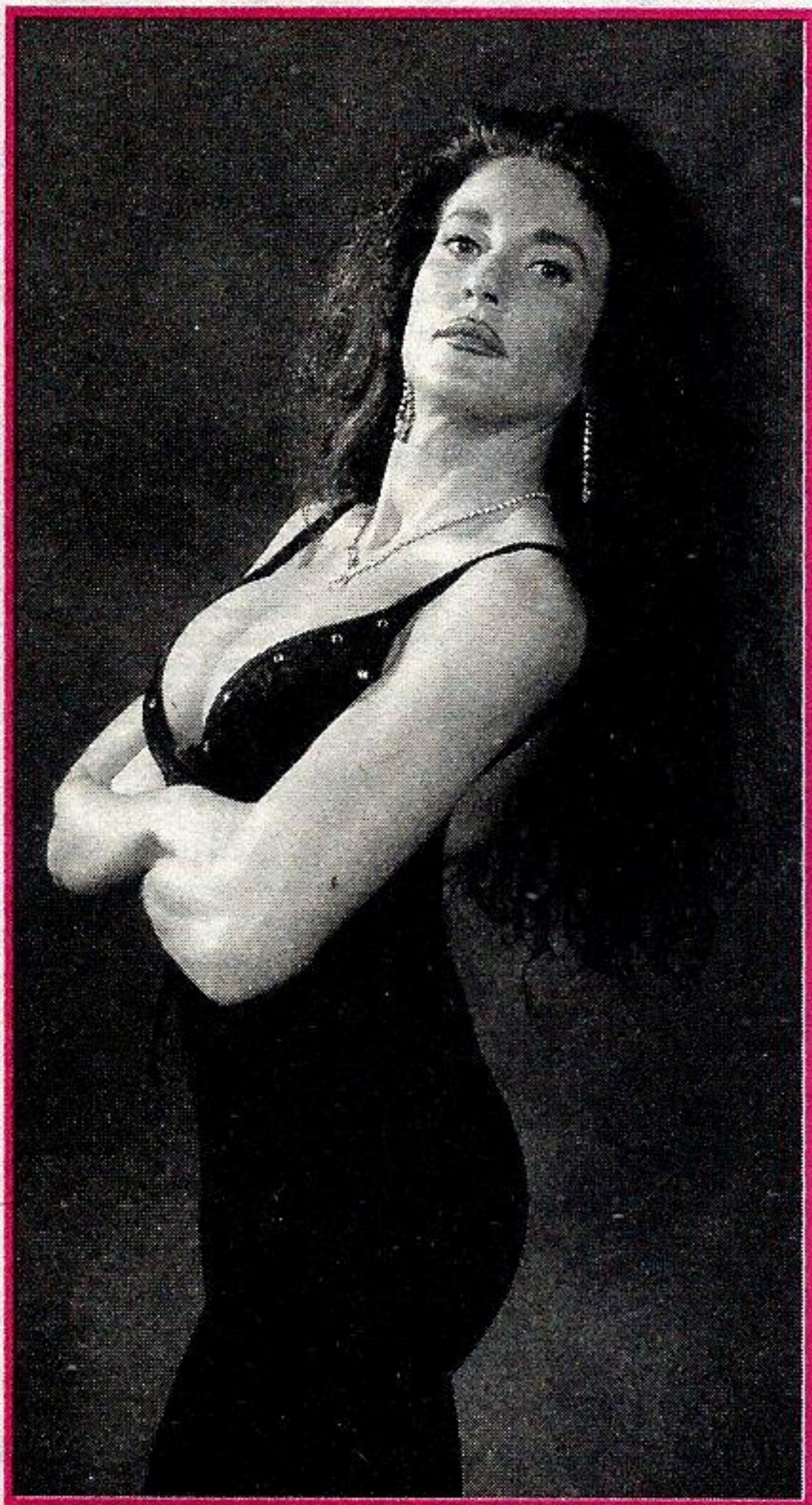
A: “That’s real simple. We got tired of being puppets for The Powers-That-Be,” said Don Harris. “When we came back to WCW, Ron and I tried to climb the ladder by less violent means than we’d normally take, but we weren’t comfortable playing corporate stooges. Ron and me can’t play that yes-man crap. Never could, actually. In fact, we got tired of playing all those stupid characters we’ve been saddled with in the past. I think everyone knows what I’m talking about. We are Ron and Don Harris, and we’re gonna take over WCW because nobody is tough enough to stop us. When you get right down to it, we ain’t really the creative type, and we sure weren’t in control of anything. So now we’re going back to doing what we do best—kickin’ [butt].”

...

Q: “I have a question for Elektra: Elektra, of all the wrestlers in ECW to valet for, you have aligned yourself with Danny Doring. Why

did you choose Doring?”—Travis Lawyer, Seattle, WA

A: “That’s easy. Danny was the studliest man in the locker room when I showed up at ECW,” replied Elektra. “There was



Elektra could have chosen any man in ECW, but she chose Danny Doring because he’s young and “studly.” Elektra sees great things in their future.

never a doubt in my mind that Danny was the guy for me. Besides, there is no other woman in ECW sexy enough to stand by Danny’s side. He’s a hot young prospect, and so am I. Together, we are gonna win a lot of titles and make a whole lot of money together. When you look at our attributes and how perfect we are for each other, it boggles the mind to even conceive of me guiding the career of another man. They say that behind every great man is a great woman. Well, I’m behind Danny, on top of Danny, underneath Danny ... basically I’m all over Danny, and he’s all over me, but that’s just one of the perks of managing the studliest guy in the universe.” □

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BIG BOSSMAN REHABILITATED!

Law And Order Comes To The WWF

WRESTLER CLASSIC!

This headline looks pretty ridiculous about now, doesn't it? Big Bossman is a pretty despicable human being now, but a decade ago, he didn't seem like such a bad guy. Check out this "Wrestler Classic" from May 2000 for proof!

By David Rosenbaum

THINK OF ALL the rulebreakers who could easily fit into the mode of fan favorite: Curt Hennig, Jacques and Raymond Rougeau, Lex Luger, The Midnight Express, Jerry Lawler, and Ted DiBiase are just a few examples.

The line between rulebreakers and fan favorites isn't all that thick. Many wrestlers have made the transition in startlingly easy fashion.

But there are the others, the men who are so evil and vicious that it's hard to imagine them as anything but mean, ruthless rulebreakers, men like Larry Zbyszko, Rick Rude, Bad News Brown, Buzz Sawyer ...

... Big Bossman.

And yet, as the result of a most improbable set of circumstances, Big Bossman is now hearing the cheers of WWF fans. The big prison guard from Cobb County, Georgia, has, quite miraculously, become a fan favorite!

Perhaps it came out of Bossman's frustration with his manager, Slick. Bossman was promised great things when he was recruited to the WWF, but Slick failed to deliver. Bossman landed a series of title matches against WWF World champion Hulk Hogan, but the matches stopped coming just as Bossman felt he was on the verge of solving the

Hogan puzzle.

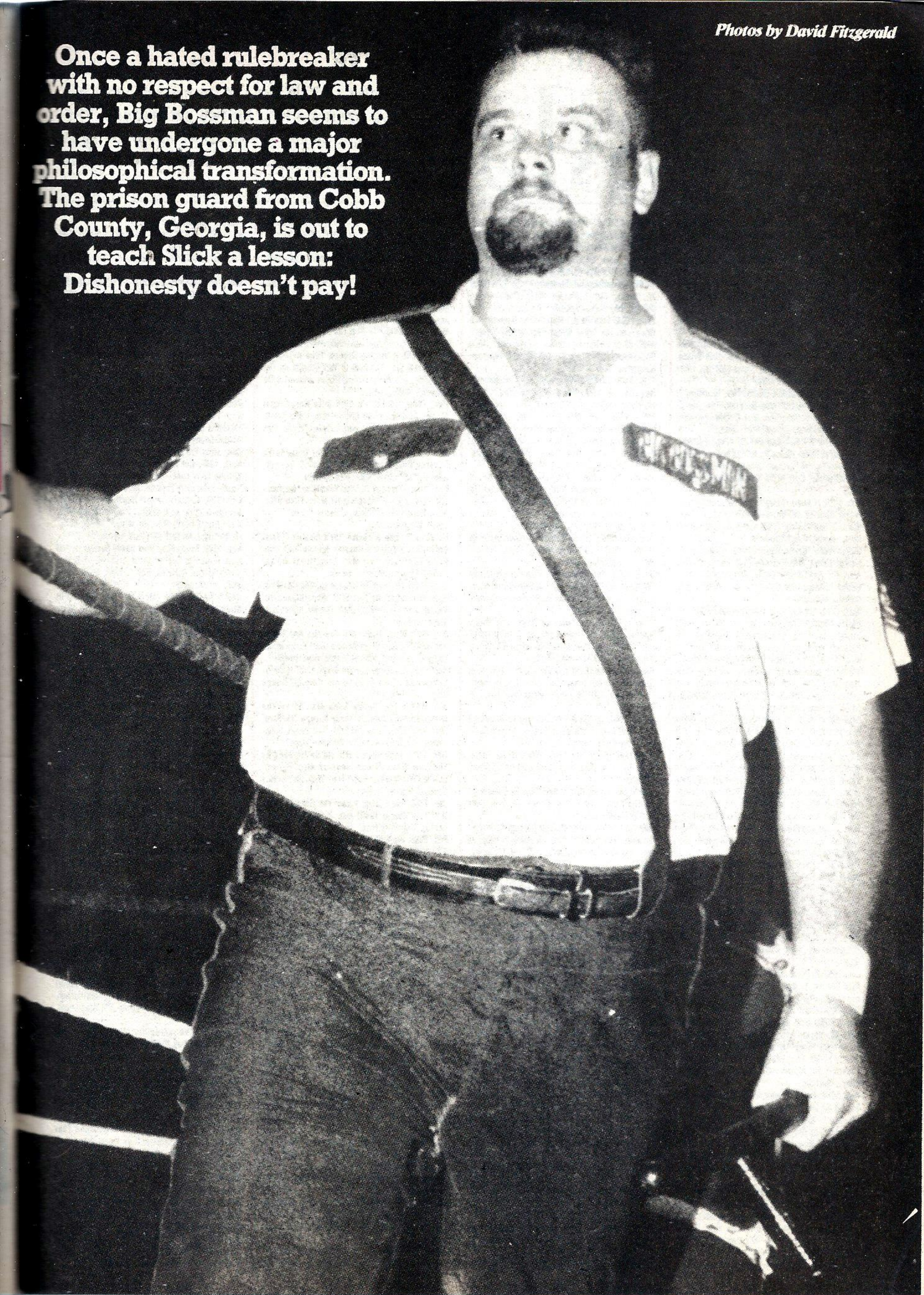
Then Slick started thinking of himself. He put Bossman and Akeem together and formed The Twin Towers. But on last year's NBC prime-time broadcast, *The Main Event*, Bossman and Gang were humbled by Hogan, and the aura surrounding this supposedly terrifying tag team crumbled.

Slick couldn't put the pieces back together. Bossman and Gang went nowhere.

In early January, Bossman decided he couldn't take it anymore. He was sick of Slick's badgering, tired of taking orders from a man he couldn't respect.

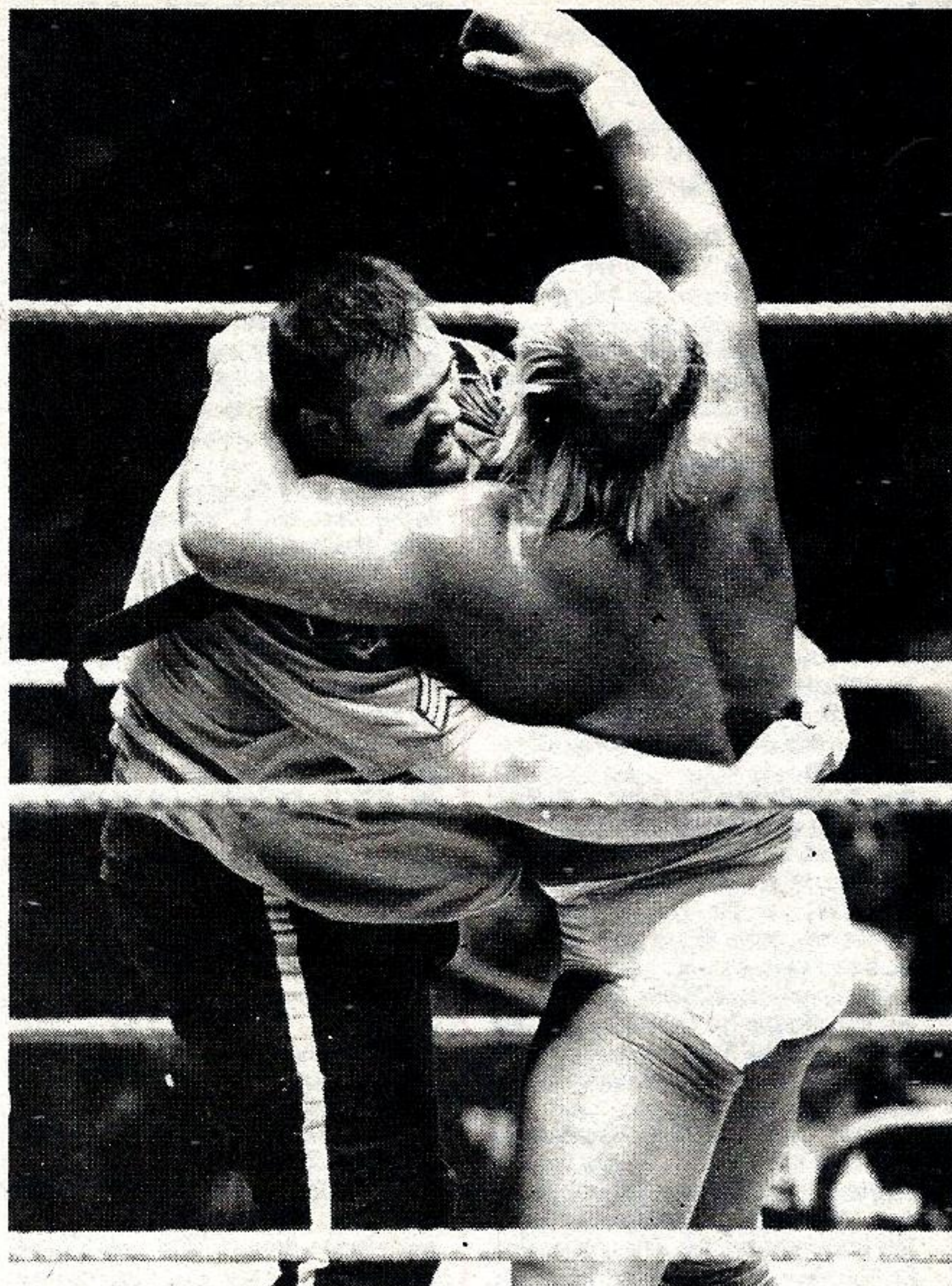
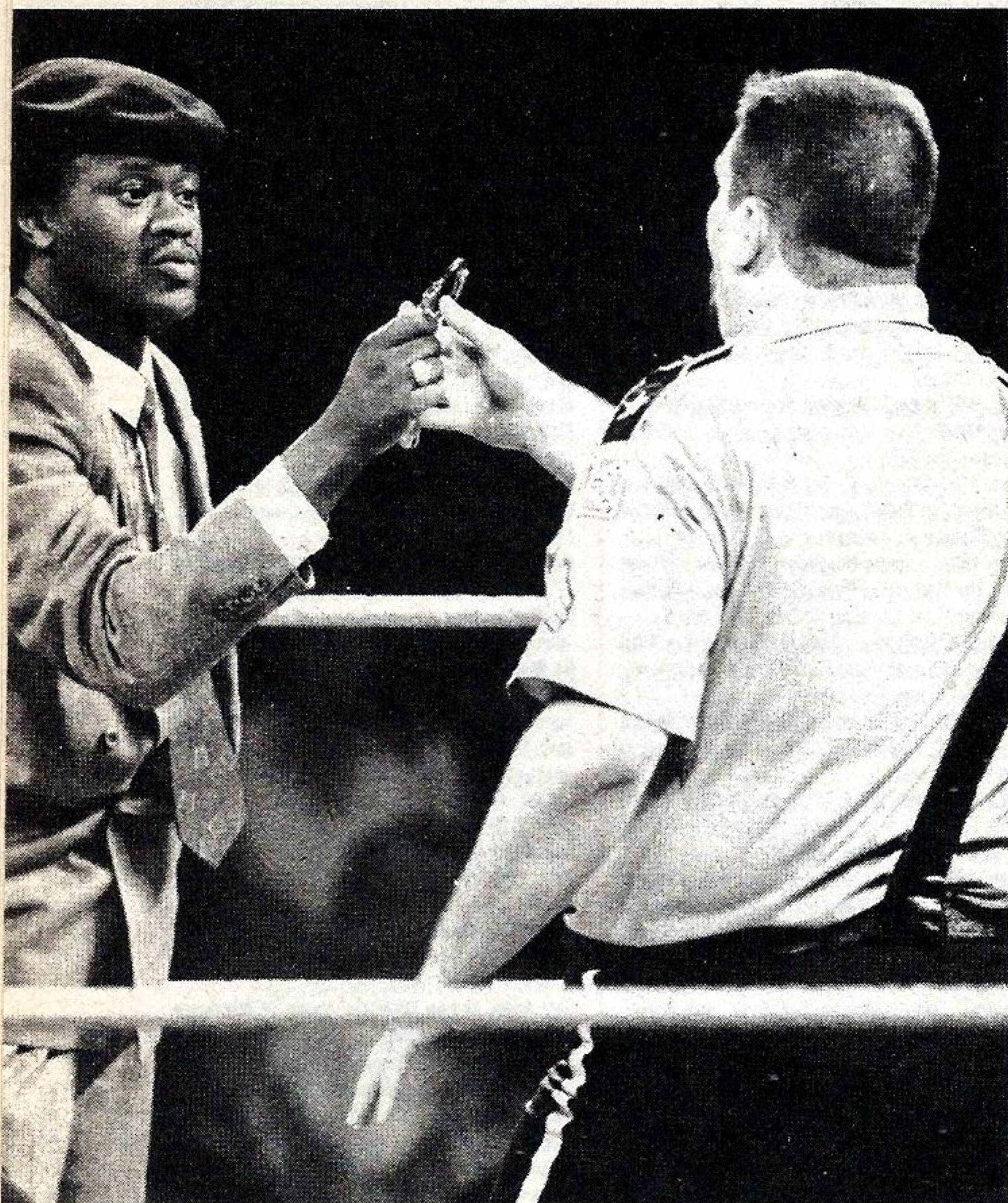
(Continued on page 62)

Once a hated rulebreaker with no respect for law and order, Big Bossman seems to have undergone a major philosophical transformation. The prison guard from Cobb County, Georgia, is out to teach Slick a lesson: Dishonesty doesn't pay!

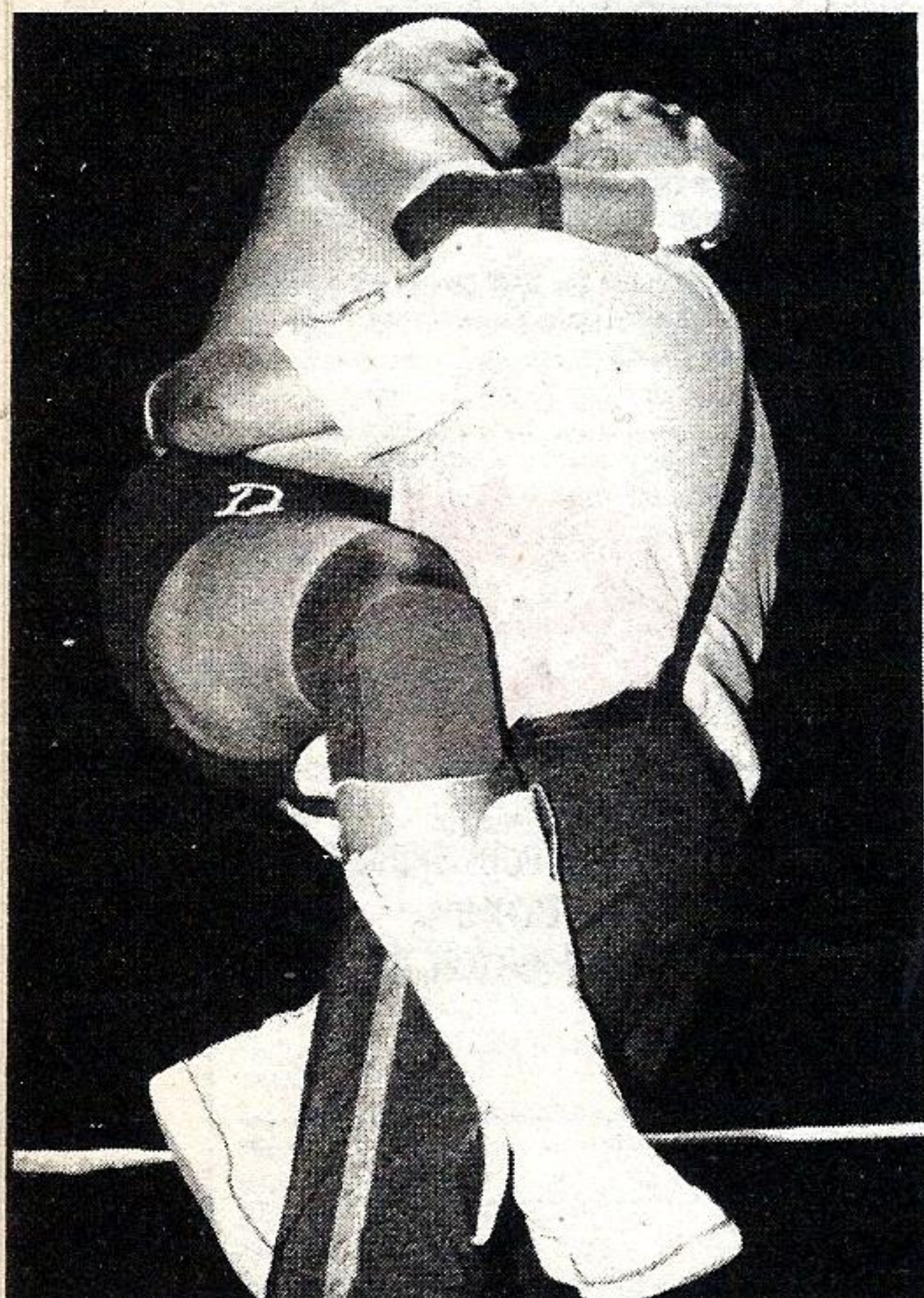


BIG BOSSMAN

(Continued from page 59)



Slick hands Big Bossman a pair of handcuffs to use on another hapless victim (above left); Bossman is through taking orders from the manager. Bossman bearhugs Hulk Hogan (above right); his turn away from rulebreaking will undoubtedly cost him title shots.



Bossman bearhugs Dusty Rhodes. As a fan favorite, Bossman will no longer be going after the "American Dream."

The situation came to a violent head on January 2 in Birmingham, Alabama. After Ted DiBiase scored an easy victory over Lee Peak, Jake Roberts stormed the ring and clotheslined DiBiase—and Virgil!—over the top rope.

Roberts grabbed the "million-dollar belt," placed it in a bag with his pet boa constrictor, Damian, and returned to the dressing room.

The stage was set.

Later in the evening, Roberts scored a convincing win over Pete Sanchez. DiBiase, sensing an opportunity to catch Roberts off-guard and regain the belt, sent Virgil after Jake. But when Roberts pulled Damian out of his bag, DiBiase and Virgil fled to the dressing room.

Finally, in one of the most anticipated matchups of the evening, Roberts wrestled DiBiase. It was a

match like the many others the two archrivals have had, with an added little twist: The "Million-Dollar Man" was accompanied to the ring by Virgil and Slick.

When DiBiase got into trouble—and it didn't take too long—Slick returned to the dressing room and fetched Big Bossman. Roberts won the match by disqualification, but DiBiase, Virgil, and Bossman triple-teamed him and handcuffed him to the ropes. He suffered a terrible beating and was helpless to fight back.

But the night was not over yet. While Roberts was still in the ring, Bossman, Slick, DiBiase, and Virgil appeared on Brother Love's interview segment. Bossman and Slick began arguing over a payoff. Then DiBiase stuck his nose in and challenged Bossman to get the "million-dollar belt" out of Roberts'

bag.

Bossman accepted the challenge. But instead of pulling the belt out of the bag, he grabbed Damian. Bossman told DiBiase that if he wanted the belt, he'd have to come after it himself. He uncuffed Roberts, raised Roberts' hand in victory, and returned Damian.

Bossman saved the best for last. He returned to the Brother Love set and, to the delight of the crowd, shoved Slick to the floor. It was an incredible sight, and the crowd gleefully paid homage to its new hero. The rehabilitation of Big Bossman was underway!

What happens now?

Of course, Bossman is not a title contender anymore. As a fan favorite, he'll most likely get cut off from shots at Hogan. But Bossman doesn't seem to care. He has one thing on his mind: to put Slick in his place and teach the man a lesson.

That shouldn't be much of a problem. Slick's stable is down to two men: Akeem and Rick Martel. Akeem has barely been a factor recently; in fact, he's rarely seen at WWF cards. Martel, also known as "The Model," has been badly embarrassed by Brutus Beefcake.

Life hasn't been good to the "Slickster." In any even, it has been fair.

While Bossman's humbling Slick, he certainly wouldn't mind stuffing DiBiase into Roberts' terrifying bag of reptilian terrors. That would certainly rattle the "Million-Dollar Man"!

Most importantly, Bossman now has a chance to practice law and order the way it was meant to be practiced. For the past two years, Bossman has been a renegade cop, an embarrassment to the criminal justice system. But Bossman has proven that renegades can correct their ways.

Rulebreakers of the WWF are in big trouble: There's a lawman on the loose, and he's aiming to set a few crooked people straight! □

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FALL/82 Section:
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SUMMER/83 Section:
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FALL/83 Section:
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WINTER/84 Section: Sexiest Superstar; Color Action Gallery: Billy Jack Haynes.

SPRING/85 Section:
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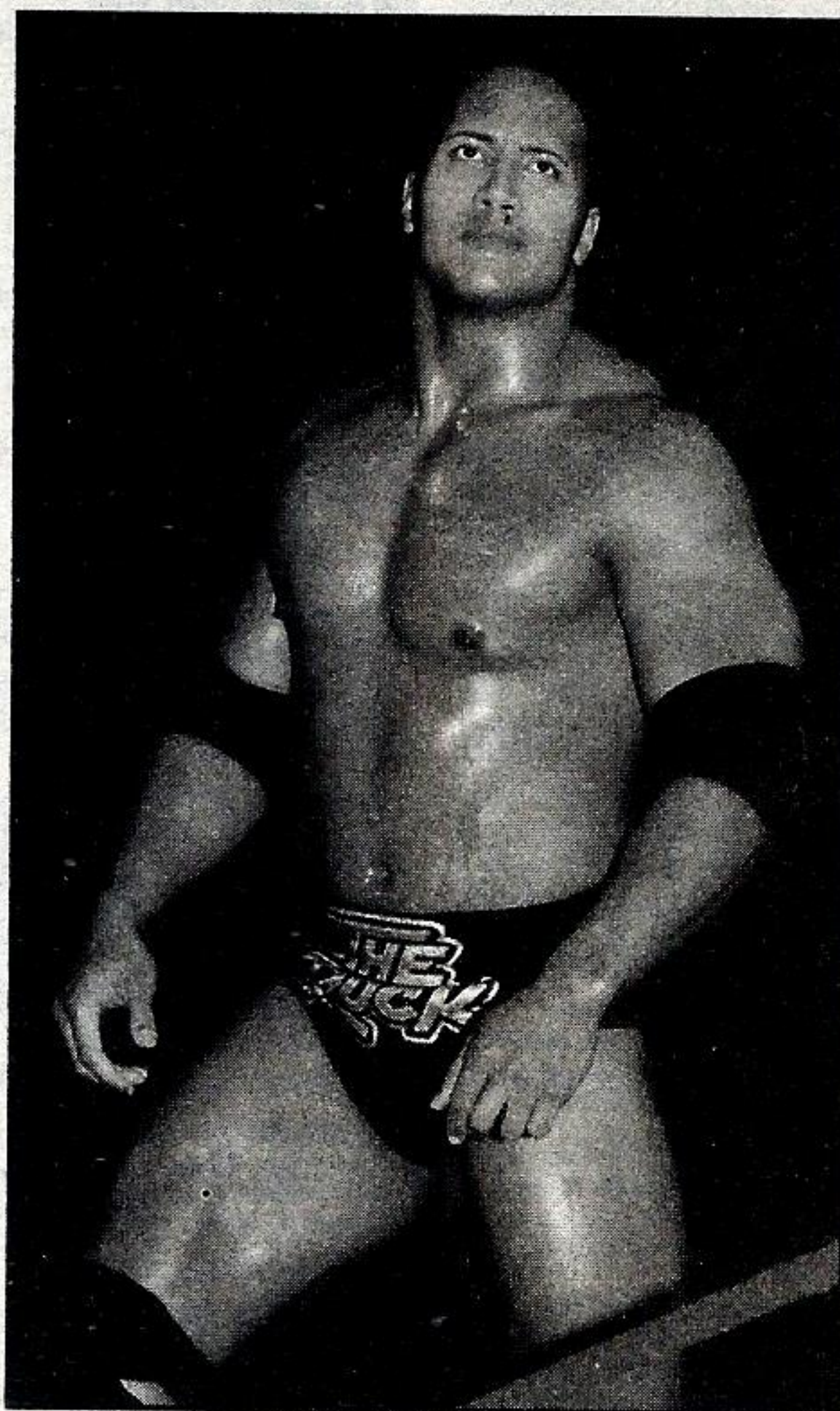
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Wrestler

TOP 10

- 1 MIKE AWESOME**
285, Tampa, FL
(5) ECW World champion
- 2 TRIPLE-H**
279, Greenwich, CT
(-) WWF World champion
- 3 VADER**
450, Denver, CO
(2) All-Japan Triple Crown champion
- 4 BRET HART**
235, Calgary, Alberta
(3) No. 2 contender: WCW World title
- 5 KENSUKE SASAKI**
233, Tokyo, Japan
(-) IWGP heavyweight champion
- 6 THE ROCK**
272, Miami, FL
(9) No. 3 contender: WWF World title
- 7 CHRIS BENOIT**
218, Edmonton, Alberta
(-) No. 3 contender: WCW World title
- 8 CHRIS JERICHO**
225, Vancouver, British Columbia
(7) Co-WWF Intercontinental champion
- 9 JEFF JARRETT**
230, Nashville, TN
(8) WCW U.S. champion
- 10 SID VICIOUS**
318, West Memphis, AR
(-) No. 4 contender: WCW World title



The Rock

TAG TEAMS

- 1 BILLY GUNN & JESSE JAMES**
Combined weight: 516 pounds
(1) WWF World tag team champions
- 2 JUN AKIYAMA & KENTA KOBASHI**
Combined weight: 491 pounds
(3) All-Japan International tag team champions
- 3 JUSTIN CREDIBLE & LANCE STORM**
Combined weight: 459 pounds
(6) ECW World tag team champions
- 4 YUJI NAGATA & MANABU NAKANISHI**
Combined weight: 455 pounds
(4) IWGP International tag team champions
- 5 BRADSHAW & FAAROOQ**
Combined weight: 600 pounds
(7) No. 1 contenders: WWF World tag title
- 6 DAVID FLAIR & CROWBAR**
Combined weight: 434 pounds
(-) No. 1 contenders: WCW World tag title
- 7 TOMMY DREAMER & RAVEN**
Combined weight: 480 pounds
(2) No. 1 contenders: ECW World tag title
- 8 CHRISTIAN & EDGE**
Combined weight: 465 pounds
(-) No. 2 contenders: WWF World tag title
- 9 BIG VITO & JOHNNY THE BULL**
Combined weight: 487 pounds
(-) WCW World tag team champions
- 10 BRIAN CHRISTOPHER & SCOTT TAYLOR**
Combined weight: 433 pounds
(-) No. 3 contenders: WWF World tag title

WCW

World Champion:
TITLE VACANT

- 1—JEFF JARRETT**
(1) 230, Nashville, TN
- 2—BRET HART**
(C) 235, Calgary, Alberta
- 3—CHRIS BENOIT**
(3) 218, Edmonton, Alberta
- 4—SID VICIOUS**
(5) 318, West Memphis, AR
- 5—KEVIN NASH**
(6) 356, Detroit, MI
- 6—DIAMOND DALLAS PAGE**
(8) 260, Tampa, FL
- 7—VAMPIRO**
(-) 220, Montreal, Quebec
- 8—BILLY KIDMAN**
(-) 195, Allentown, PA
- 9—BUFF BAGWELL**
(-) 240, Marietta, GA
- 10—BOOKER T**
(-) 250, Harlem, NY

WWF

World Champion:
TRIPLE-H

- (3) 279, Greenwich, CT
- 1—CHRIS JERICHO**
(1) 225, Vancouver, British Columbia
- 2—CHYNA**
(-) 201, Nashua, NH
- 3—THE ROCK**
(2) 272, Miami, FL
- 4—THE BIG SHOW**
(C) 500, Atlanta, GA
- 5—KURT ANGLE**
(7) 233, Pittsburgh, PA
- 6—RIKISHI PHATU**
(-) 401, San Francisco, CA
- 7—KANE**
(6) 345, parts unknown
- 8—CACTUS JACK**
(-) 277, Truth Or Consequences, NM
- 9—TEST**
(-) 302, Toronto, Ontario
- 10—X-PAC**
(8) 212, Minneapolis, MN

ECW

World Champion:
MIKE AWESOME

- (2) 285, Tampa, FL
- 1—ROB VAN DAM**
(1) 237, Battle Creek, MI
- 2—SABU**
(2) 225, Bombay
- 3—SPIKE DUDLEY**
(8) 155, Philadelphia, PA
- 4—SUPER CRAZY**
(5) 172, Mexico City, Mexico
- 5—YOSHIHIRO TAJIRI**
(10) 224, Tokyo, Japan
- 6—RHINO**
(4) 285, Detroit, MI
- 7—ANGEL**
(-) 260, Bronx, NY
- 8—LITTLE GUIDO**
(-) 221, Howard Beach, NY
- 9—JUSTIN CREDIBLE**
(6) 225, Waterbury, CT
- 10—LANCE STORM**
(9) 234, Calgary, Alberta

NWA

NWA Champion:
NAOYA OGAWA

- (C) 286, Tokyo, Japan
- 1—COLORADO KID**
(2) 231, Colorado Springs, CO
- 2—TERRY TAYLOR**
(1) 226, Atlanta, GA
- 3—KEVIN NORTHCUTT**
(5) 348, Chalmette, LA
- 4—BRIAN ANTHONY**
(-) 220, Pittsburgh, PA
- 5—GARY STEELE**
(10) 241, London, England
- 6—BIG DON BRODIE**
(-) 325, Jackson, MS
- 7—TWIGGY RAMIREZ**
(8) 213, New York, NY
- 8—BLADE BOUDREAUX**
(9) 230, New Orleans, LA
- 9—RICK MICHAELS**
(6) 224, Jacksonville, FL
- 10—CURTIS SLAMDAWG**
(-) 222, Boston, MA

OFFICIAL RATINGS

Top 10 and Tag Team ratings are based on won-lost records for the past month, quality of opposition, and inherent skill of each wrestler or team. These ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board. All other ratings are based on the official current positions of challengers to the top title in each category; certain titleholders receive an automatic spot in the ratings. The number in parentheses indicates a wrestler's position in that category last issue; (-) indicates that the wrestler was not rated in that category last issue while (C) indicates the wrestler was champion in that category last issue. Note: In an effort to keep the ratings as up-to-date as possible, these pages are often the last to be sent to the printer. Thus, the ratings may reflect changes not reflected in the remainder of the issue.

For period ended January 19, 2000

APPALACHIA PRO WRESTLING: Champion—Anthony Perdue; 1—War Machine; 2—Cuban Assassin; 3—Scotty Blaze; 4—Jinsei Ronin; 5—Joe Brody; 6—Frank Parker; 7—Chuck Jones; 8—Roger Anderson; 9—Johnny Blast; 10—Scotty McKeever.

EASTERN WRESTLING FEDERATION: Champion—Title Vacant; 1—Grungemaster; 2—Jeff Hamrick; 3—Chris Hamrick; 4—Axl Knight; 5—Ace Cauldron; 6—Necro; 7—Zack Ruckus; 8—Kevin Kirby; 9—Able Atoms; 10—Ricky Noble.

GLOBAL PRO WRESTLING: Champion—Title Vacant; 1—New York Nightmare; 2—Scott Storm; 3—Treach Phillips Jr.; 4—Tim Storm; 5—James Grizzly; 6—Nitetrain C. Crane; 7—Bubba Monroe; 8—Dexter Hardaway; 9—Bill Ash; 10—Tim Vain.

INT'L PRO WRESTLING: Champion—King Kong Bundy; 1—Tom Brandi; 2—Julio Fantastico; 3—The Patriot; 4—George Steele; 5—Doink the Clown; 6—Cueball Carmichael; 7—Mike Quackenbush; 8—Johnny Graham; 9—Steve Lombardi; 10—Rob Noxious.

MARYLAND CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Bruiser; 1—Romeo Valentino; 2—Tom Brandi; 3—Julio Fantastico; 4—Gillberg; 5—Gregory Martin; 6—Danny Rose; 7—Cueball Carmichael; 8—Jimmy Cicero; 9—Dino Devine; 10—Corporal Punishment.

NEW WORLD WRESTLING: Champion—Even Colder; 1—K.C. Hammer; 2—Kenny Hendrix; 3—Doink the Clown; 4—Jackhammer; 5—Cyrus

Steele; 6—Jay Pumper; 7—Brian Ireland; 8—Phattie Daddy; 9—Stevie Lee; 10—Cap'n Jack.

NORTH AMERICAN WRESTLING ALLIANCE: Champion—The Intimidator; 1—Dorty Reid; 2—Shane Hooker; 3—Domitri; 4—John Stone; 5—Gino Blanchard; 6—Big Willy; 7—Spiffy Stevens; 8—Mr. Breeze; 9—Big E; 10—Lady Scorpion.

PENNSYLVANIA CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Michael Modest; 1—Joe E. Legend; 2—Cheetah Master; 3—Jimi V; 4—Flash Flanagan; 5—Jason Lee; 6—Scott Furie; 7—Vince Goodnight; 8—Ground Zero; 9—Ty Street; 10—Eddie Valentine.

RHODE ISLAND WRESTLING ALLIANCE: Champion—Bad News; 1—Danger Boy Alfredo; 2—Wolverine; 3—Pierre the Mountie; 4—Max Brannigan; 5—Danny Cama; 6—Rev. Chane Brannigan; 7—Trip Rider; 8—Mael; 9—Davios; 10—Scott Thomas.

TEXAS CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Tommy Nero; 1—Blake Wiggins; 2—Jeremy Young; 3—Redd Dogg Begnaud; 4—Mace; 5—Beast; 6—Brangus; 7—Masked Italiano; 8—Pendragon; 9—Coach; 10—Bigfoot.

UNIFIED CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Tony Sweatt; 1—Chad Cheetum; 2—Steve Southern; 3—Al Savage; 4—Bob Armstrong; 5—Joe Kane; 6—Bobby Doll; 7—Tyrone the Dancing Machine; 8—Echmo; 9—Frank Smith; 10—Marcell Pringle.

XTREME PRO WRESTLING: Champion—Dick Dudley; 1—Damien Steele; 2—Supreme; 3—Johnny Webb; 4—Kid Kaos; 5—Jake Lawless; 6—Kronus; 7—Michael Modest; 8—Donovan Morgan; 9—Carlito Montana; 10—The Messiah.

NEW JAPAN

IWGP Champion:

KENSUKE SASAKI

(-) 233, Tokyo, Japan

1—GENICHIRO TENRYU

(C) 235, Fukui, Japan

2—KEIJI MUTO

(2) 245, Yamanashi, Japan

3—MASA CHONO

(1) 235, Tokyo, Japan

4—SHINYA HASHIMOTO

(-) 287, Gifu, Japan

5—NAOYA OGAWA

(-) 286, Tokyo, Japan

6—HIROYOSHI TENZAN

(10) 270, Tokyo, Japan

7—MANABU NAKANISHI

(3) 235, Tokyo, Japan

8—YUJI NAGATA

(4) 220, Tokyo, Japan

9—SHIRO KOSHINAKA

(-) 225, Tokyo, Japan

10—JUSHIN LIGER

(5) 206, Hiroshima, Japan

ALL-JAPAN

Triple Crown Champion:

VADER

(C) 450, Denver, CO

1—JUN AKIYAMA

(3) 230, Hiroshima, Japan

2—MITSU HARU MISAWA

(1) 228, Ashikaga, Japan

3—KENTA KOBASHI

(2) 261, Fukuchiyama, Japan

4—TOSHI AKI KAWADA

(-) 245, Ashikaga, Japan

5—AKIRA TAUE

(4) 265, Chichibu, Japan

6—STAN HANSEN

(8) 322, Borger, TX

7—YOSHINARI OGAWA

(5) 202, Tokyo, Japan

8—MIKE BURTON

(9) 256, Austin, TX

9—JOHNNY ACE

(7) 250, San Bernardino, CA

10—YOSHIHIRO TAKAYAMA

(6) 270, Sapporo, Japan

EMLL

EMLL Champion:

UNIVERSO DOS MIL

(C) 240, Mexico City, Mexico

1—VILLANO III

(5) 220, Mexico City, Mexico

2—EL HIJO DEL SANTO

(3) 180, Tulancingo, Mexico

3—SHOCKER

(-) 185, Guadalajara, Mexico

4—SCORPIO JR.

(-) 195, Nezahualcoyotl, Mexico

5—ULTIMO GUERRERO

(4) 173, Mexico City, Mexico

6—PIERROTH JR.

(-) 251, Cuernavaca, Mexico

7—ATLANTIS

(6) 180, Guadalajara, Mexico

8—RAYO DE JALISCO JR.

(2) 270, Guadalajara, Mexico

9—MR. NIEBLA

(8) 185, Cuatitlan, Mexico

10—NEGRO CASAS

(-) 175, Mexico City, Mexico

AAA

AAA Champion:

LATIN LOVER

(7) 190, Monterrey, Mexico

1—OCTAGON

(2) 180, Monterrey, Mexico

2—PIRATA MORGAN

(9) 221, Mexico City, Mexico

3—HECTOR GARZA

(4) 215, Monterrey, CA

4—CIBERNETICO

(3) 235, Mexico City, Mexico

5—PERRO AGUAYO JR.

(5) 165, Zacatecas, Mexico

6—JERRY ESTRADA

(10) 239, Montclava, Mexico

7—MIGUEL PEREZ JR.

(8) 232, San Juan, Puerto Rico

8—PENTAGON

(-) 175, Pachuca, Mexico

9—HEAVY METAL

(1) 180, Mexico City, Mexico

10—BLUE DEMON JR.

(6) 180, Toluca, Mexico

Ratings

ANALYSIS

Notes on the Top 10 ... Another awesome month for **Mike Awesome**. The reigning ECW World heavyweight champ stumbled a bit just before Christmas, as he lost the belt to his arch-rival, **Masato Tanaka**, on December 23. He certainly recovered quickly enough. Six nights later, he was the number-one man in ECW again as a result of his victory over Tanaka in a rematch.



Mike Awesome

Given that WCW had no World champion, an injured U.S. champion (**Jeff Jarrett**), and really no one dominant wrestler at the time at which these ratings were compiled, we didn't see any justification for ranking a WCW star number one in the Top 10. The WWF has a strong World champion in **Triple-H**, who won the WWF title for a third time by beating **The Big Show** without the help of the other members of **DeGeneration X**, but he has had a hard time in recent matches with contenders such as **The Rock** and **Rikishi Phatu**. We felt no WWF wrestler earned the top spot this month.

How about Japan? New IWGP heavyweight titleholder **Kensuke Sasaki** hadn't made enough defenses, and All-Japan Triple Crown champ **Vader** has been competing primarily in tag team bouts, so they were both eliminated from consideration.

Therefore Awesome is our man. He may not be as charismatic as the other top stars in wrestling today, but he's one tremendous athlete.

Right up there with The Road Warriors and Steiners ... After watching what happened in the most recent tournament for the WCW World tag team title, we couldn't help but wonder if **Eric Bischoff** did the right thing when he decided to phase out the World tag team championship a few years ago.

First of all, having a "Lethal Lottery" to decide the pairings for this tournament was a strange idea. Shouldn't the tag team belts go to the wrestlers who work the best as a duo, not wrestlers who are forced to team?

Just a thought.

Somehow, some way, **David Flair** and his new sidekick, **Crowbar**, ended up with the gold when the tourney was over. Now, young Mr. Flair has improved a bit since last year, but as a wrestler, he still seems over-matched against WCW competition. Crowbar, in case

you didn't realize it, is the former **Devon Storm**, a man with experience in the WWF, ECW, and many, many independents. Together, they make an interesting and unusual team. They even beat a few lower-level teams in defense of the title.

Just before press time, though, they lost the belts to another new team, that of **Big Vito** and **Johnny the Bull**. We can't say we were unhappy about that. Vito and Johnny look they could have a decent future as a team. Since Flair and Crowbar accomplished more during the month, though, we ranked them sixth and the new champs ninth.

How can two people hold one belt? That **Stephanie McMahon-Helmsley** loves to stir up controversy, doesn't she? After WWF Intercontinental champion **Chris Jericho** and former champion **Chyna** pinned each other simultaneously at the December 28 taping of *Smackdown*, she could have made a very safe ruling. She could have held up the title and forced them to wrestle each other for it. Or she could have put the championship up for grabs in a tournament.

She decided to get a little creative instead. She made Jericho and Chyna co-Intercontinental champions. Thanks, Steph. That makes doing the ratings so much more exciting for us.



Chyna

Since we automatically give the top contender spot in the WWF to the I-C champ, we have a problem. The only solution was to give the I-C champs the top two contender spots in the WWF. As for which one goes first, that was a decision we had to make subjectively. This month, the nod went to Jericho. And it had nothing to do with the fact that Jericho is a man and Chyna is a woman. It had to do with the fact that Jericho had the better month. He defended the I-C belt on nearly every WWF show, while Chyna only took the occasional match after dropping the belt to Y2J. For that reason, we put Jericho in the Top 10 (at number eight) and left Chyna out. □

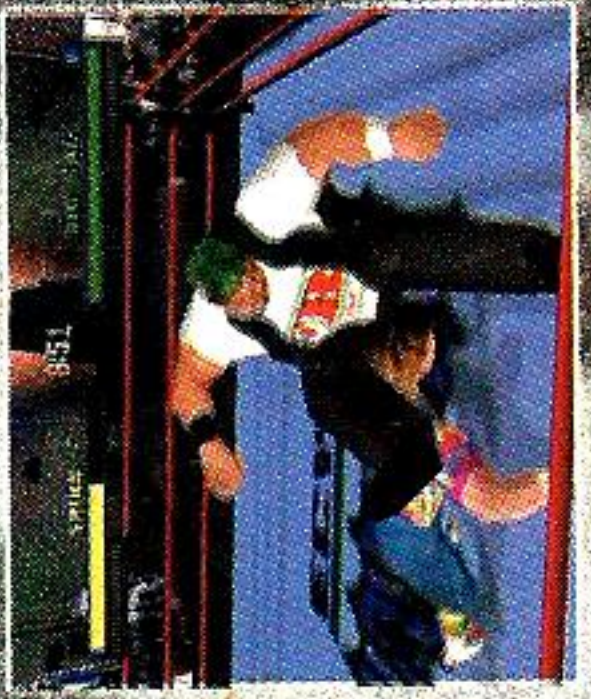
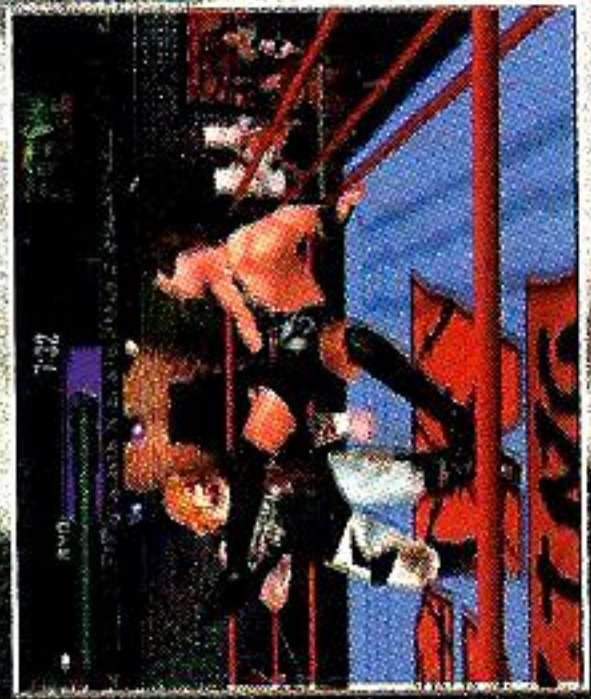
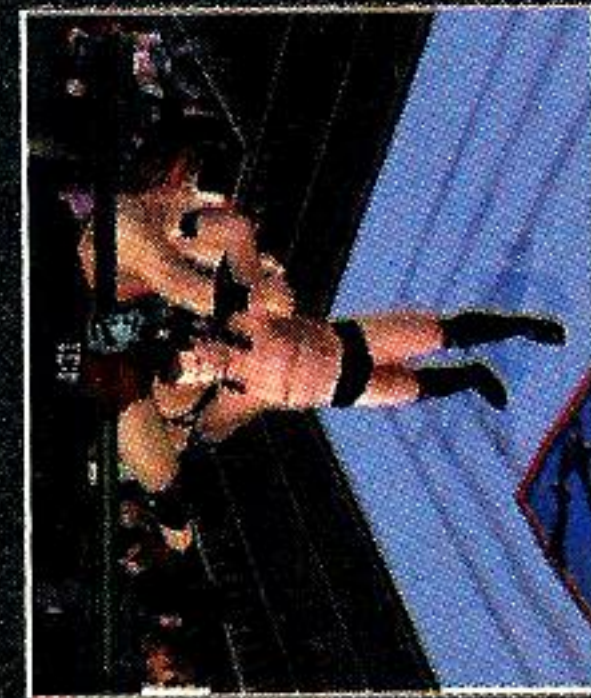
That's all for now. If you have any questions or comments regarding our ratings, we want to hear from you. Write to: "Ratings Analysis," c/o THE WRESTLER, Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034.

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